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THE WALL AND THE GATES

J. RITCHIE SMITH

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J. Ritchie Smith.

THE WALL AND THE GATES

AND OTHER SERMONS

By J. RITCHIE SMITH

Professor of Homiletics, Princeton Theological Seminary

PHILADELPHIA

THE WESTMINSTER PRESS

1919

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TO MY WIFE

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I

THE WALL

"Having a wall great and high."
Rev. 21:12

Two visions of paradise are given us in the Scripture, one at the opening and the other at the close of the sacred record. History begins and ends with paradise. But there is a striking contrast between the Old Testament picture and the New. The paradise of Genesis is a garden; the paradise of Revelation is a city. Life grows from the simple to the complex. History is one long evolution, a continuous process of the unfolding, enlarging, enriching of the race. History begins with one man and one woman roaming in childlike innocence through the sweet fields of Eden; it closes with a multitude that no man can number gathered within the walls of a city the size and splendor of which as far surpass the glory of every capital besides as the heavens are high above the earth. That is the progress of the race. The first city was built by Cain, and ever since the city has been the haunt of vice and crime. "God made the country, and man made the town." But the city is also the home of the keenest intelligence, the noblest character, the most devoted service. It is at once the glory and the shame, the hope and the despair of the world. There man is found at his best and at his worst, there he rises to the loftiest heights, sinks to the lowest depths. There the ex-

tremes of character and condition meet. The city with its rich, varied, intense, energetic life, its intimate fellowship, its boundless opportunities, its endless charms and pleasures, its interweaving of interests and relations, is the most imposing monument constructed by the genius and the power of man. Great cities are the heart and the brain of the world, and draw to themselves the young, the ardent, the ambitious from every side. Whether men seek wealth or fame or learning or pleasure or power, the city invites and allures with potent spell. With every step in the march of civilization the city assumes a place of increasing prominence and power.

The names borne by this new paradise are significant. It is the New Jerusalem, a city old yet new. The New Jerusalem is the heavenly pattern of the Kingdom of God on earth. As Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle according to the pattern shown him on the mount, this is the divine plan after which the Church must be fashioned. Man was made in the image of God; earth in the likeness of heaven. Sin has marred the image and the likeness, but they shall one day be restored. The New Jerusalem is the picture of the Church as it shall be when the work of grace is completed, and eternal glory is begun.

This is the divine plan after which God is slowly fashioning his Kingdom through the long process of the ages.

Why is the name of the old city given it? Is there anything in this city of God with its flashing splen-

dors to remind us of the capital of David? Draw near and you will find much that is familiar. Upon the twelve gates are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve foundation stones of the wall of the city bear the names of the twelve apostles. Here is Thomas the doubter, and Peter the traitor, and others of whom we know nothing but the name. This is the material with which God builds the foundation of the wall of the eternal Kingdom. Enter the city and the great multitude is called after the twelve tribes of Israel. And the King whose glory is the light of the Celestial City, is the root and the offspring of David, the Lamb that was slain, betrayed, and condemned in old Jerusalem and crucified just outside the city gate. The Church, the Kingdom, in all ages is one. There is no break in the divine plan. The New Jerusalem succeeds the old, as David is followed by his greater Son. The New Testament springs out of the Old, the Christian inherits the privileges and advantages of the Jew. Yet the new dispensation is far greater than the old as the New Jerusalem is larger and more resplendent than the city of Israel's king. The old is the seed of the new, the new is the harvest of the old. This is Jerusalem, but Jerusalem transformed, glorified, with walls of jasper, gates of pearl, and streets of gold. It is no longer the capital of an earthly monarch, but of the King of kings; no longer the home of the Jew, but of the whole brotherhood of man. "The nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it."

They that dwell there are gathered out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues. Within these ample walls is room for all the thronging myriads of earth.

It is a great city—nothing like it has ever been seen on earth. And it is a holy city. In Eden man was innocent; in the New Jerusalem man is holy. When man builds a city without God it becomes a sink of iniquity, like Sodom and Babylon. This is the city " which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God," whose walls are called salvation, and whose gates are praise. Men are no longer innocent. They are fearfully conscious of the power of evil. They bear upon their persons the scars of the long conflict with sin. The Master himself appears as a Lamb that has been slain, with the marks of the nails, the spear, the crown of thorns. The redeemed are not innocent; they have sinned and sinned deeply. But they are holy. They have encountered sin, and though often worsted, they have overcome it through the blood of the Lamb. They have climbed from the innocence of childhood to the stern virtue, the holiness of manhood. That is the moral progress of the race.

This is a holy city. But it is not the holiness of the hermitage, the cleanness of the cloister that is represented here. There are those who are in fear of death because the life beyond seems to them dim, spectral, phantasmal. Ghostly forms flit about wearily through the infinite spaces, seeking rest and finding none. That was a pagan conception of the

life to come, and it clings to men under all the light that the gospel has thrown upon the world beyond the grave. Death means the end of life, puts a final period to its interests, relations, activities. The other world, if there be another, is a region of pale and languid spirits that spend eternity in aimless wandering to and fro. But this is a city, throbbing with life and energy. Heaven is the great heart of the universe, through which the tides of grace and power flow out through all the wide universe. Life there is fuller, larger, richer, clothed with majesty, bearing the image, having the nature of God, exalted to the throne of him who created all things and now upholds them by the word of his power. Even a city with its busy multitude may be holy if God dwells in it.

The book of Revelation opens with the picture of seven churches and closes with the vision of one city. The seven grow to one. God is ever drawing his children more closely together, and some day the prayer of the Master shall be answered, and all his disciples shall be one in him. The unity which is ideal here, imperfect in fact, shall there be fully accomplished. The seven churches are poor and sinful. The best of them have their faults and failings; some of them have sunk so low that they are threatened with speedy destruction unless they repent. Surely this is unpromising material out of which to build the Kingdom of God, these divided churches with their false doctrines and evil deeds. Yet from these churches this city is fashioned.

These throngs that tread the streets of gold, arrayed in white robes, that raise the song of triumph and of praise as they surround the throne, that serve God without ceasing, these are they that came out of the pollution and defilement of earth, stained with many sins; but they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The seven grow to one; the poor, weak, sinful churches are changed to the glorious Church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, made ready for the bridegroom, and having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The Kingdom of God is one, unfolding step by step and stage by stage from its humble origin in Eden to its glorious consummation in the New Jerusalem. We are building the Celestial City. Our labors, our prayers, our sacrifices are rearing the eternal home. It is the city of God, his handiwork, but into it enters the life and work of men. The incense of heaven is the prayers of the saints. The inhabitants of heaven are the sons of earth. Human names are written upon its walls and foundations. We are not only permitted by God's grace to enter the eternal city, we have a part in building it.

If man is the child of God, he must share his Father's hatred of sin, must have a part in God's war against it, in God's triumph over it. If there is sin in God's universe, man cannot long remain ignorant of it. The son must take his place beside his Father in the battle against sin that threatens to wreck the universe, and make it all a hell. The path from innocence to holiness lies through temptation.

In the stress and strain of temptation the noblest character is formed. This may throw at least a ray of light upon the dark mystery of sin, and suggest why God permitted it to enter the world. When sin has gained a footing in the universe man must bear his part in driving it out. Man cannot remain innocent, he must press on to holiness, the holiness that recognizes sin, and overcomes it.

As we look upon these pictures of the old paradise and the new, this conspicuous difference thrusts itself upon us. Eden lay open on every side. Only after sin had entered and done its deadly work did God place the cherubim on guard with flaming sword. Innocence is always in danger, for innocence is ignorant of evil. There are unwise parents who would rear their children in seclusion from the cares and temptations of life, shield them from all contact with things evil. It is a foolish endeavor and futile. Sooner or later they must meet the evil of which the world is full, and their eyes will be opened. To keep from them all knowledge of the Tempter and his snares is to expose them to his assaults without a shield. The best we can do for our children is to teach them the fear of God, warn them against the seductions of sin, and send them into the world with our prayers to fight the same battle that we have waged. To keep them in health of body and spirit it is not necessary to expose them to disease, but it is necessary to inculcate the laws of health, and show them the evils that they must encounter.

The city is encircled by a great and high wall. Of

course we do not interpret the description literally. We do not think of a city in the form of a cube, nor of a wall of brick or stone. The form, the dimensions, the wall of the city are all figures that represent the perfections of the paradise above. Heaven must be painted in the colors of earth that our eyes may see it. What does the wall signify? What quality of the Kingdom of God does it represent? What is that in the Kingdom which answers to the wall of the holy city? The wall signifies separation. It divides those within the city from those without. Into these two classes all men are divided, and they are separated by the wall, too high for men to climb, too strong for men to storm. The line is sharply drawn. "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

To those who are within the city, the wall means safety. There, as Augustine says, no enemy enters, thence no friend departs. The wall great and high is their sure defense. Eden is open on every side, the New Jerusalem is a stronghold into which the righteous runneth and is safe. Only the holy are safe, those who have met sin and overcome it through faith. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Within the wall is found all that the heart may

wish. The blessedness of the Kingdom is represented in two ways: the absence of all that is evil, and the presence of all that is good. Whatever pertains to sin, sorrow, suffering, is wanting there. In the description of the holy city how often the word "no" occurs. "Death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away." "There shall be no more sea," barren, unstable, treacherous. As John looked out from his island prison, the sea lay before him as the barrier that stood between him and his home. There is nothing to divide us there. There is neither sun nor moon, for the glory of God is the light of the Celestial City, the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. The redeemed walk in the radiance of that uncreated light. There is no night. No darkness veils the face of God. Here night is a blessed boon. "He giveth his beloved sleep." We roll off the cares and burdens of the day, as the night enfolds us, and with the morning awake refreshed and strengthened for the labors of another day. But there we shall never grow weary. We shall no longer need to recruit our exhausted energies by surrendering one third of life to sleep, for we shall serve without weariness, and draw unfailing strength directly from the Fountainhead. Nothing unclean is found there, no soul that has not been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

"I saw no temple therein." The Temple was the center of the old city, representing the presence of

God with his people. But what the Temple represented in old Jerusalem is accomplished in the New Jerusalem. There God is revealed in the fullness of his grace and of his glory. "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face." This God, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, or can see, they see him, and walk in the light of his countenance forever. And gathering up the whole within a single word John tells us that there shall be no more curse. Then shall the word of Zechariah find its ample fulfillment, "And men shall dwell therein, and there shall be no more curse; but Jerusalem shall dwell safely." The curse that was pronounced in Eden and has rested upon man through all the ages of his strange eventful history is lifted from us at last by him who redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. The curse that was sinking us to hell he took upon himself, and all they that put their trust in him are free.

Nothing that partakes of the weakness, the imperfection, the distress, the uncleanness of earth may enter the heavenly home.

And, on the other hand, all that is most beautiful and precious on earth is employed to set forth the glories of the Celestial City. Language is the child of experience. We sometimes ask, Why is so little told us of the life beyond the grave? Perhaps God has told us all that we are able to comprehend. What language of earth may avail to express the bliss of heaven? There is a higher range of ex-

perience, a nobler order of life, which we have no words to express. The glories of heaven cannot be portrayed in the speech of earth. Yet, imperfect as they are, figures drawn from our own experience are the only means by which heaven may be represented to us. And John gathers all the treasures of earth within the walls of the city that we may understand something of the greatness and the riches of the Kingdom of God. Here are the sea of glass and the crystal river, and trees of unfading leaf and perennial fruit, gold and pearls and precious stones. Yet these are only the figures of the true wealth of the Kingdom. Beauty and gold and gems have no power to bring peace to the heart here, they cannot bring peace to the heart hereafter. If this were all that heaven has to offer, we should gaze with wonder upon the gates of pearl, walk up and down the golden streets, wander by the shores of the crystal river and the glassy sea, recline beneath the shade of the tree of life, hear the harps and hallelujahs of the heavenly host; and then we should turn our steps toward the gate, and say to the guardian angel stationed there: "I have seen it all, and it is very beautiful, wonderful beyond words. Now, if you please, I should like to go home." It is not these things that make heaven. They are only the earthly representation of realities that cannot be clothed in human speech. And the highest here is the lowest there. The gems that bedeck the breast of beauty, and sparkle in the diadems of kings, adorn the foundation of the walls of the Celestial City.

Solomon made silver to be as stones in Jerusalem; in the New Jerusalem gold is trodden underfoot. The best of earth is fit only for the feet of the saints. The crowns of earth are made of gold, and the streets of heaven. The most beautiful and precious treasures of earth yield only a faint reflection of the riches above. The wealth of heaven is not gold and gems, but faith and righteousness and love and peace and joy. If a man has no desire for these, heaven has nothing to offer him. But to him who seeks first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness it is said, heaven is all you want.

In the midst of this magnificent description of the glories of the city of God, where language is strained to the utmost to portray what lies beyond the power of speech, there is found this simple line, that is worth immeasurably more than all the beauties and splendors of the scene: "God himself shall be with them, and be their God, and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." That is the jewel, all else is only the setting. The real heaven John paints for us with a single stroke. As we enter the gates of pearl with tear-stained faces, God comes to meet us, takes us in his arms, and with his own hand wipes away our tears, just as our mother used to do when we ran to her in pain or fear. He does not send an angel to comfort us, he comes himself. Almighty God, Maker and Ruler of the universe, bids me welcome. The hand that fashioned the earth and spread abroad the heavens wipes away my tears. How many kinds of tears there are, as many

as the sorrows that beat upon us, as the emotions that play upon our hearts. There are tears of pain, tears of remorse, tears of foreboding, tears of grief, tears of loneliness. God wipes them all away.

Upon one occasion William Wilberforce, the philanthropist, and Robert Hall, the great preacher, of whom it is said that throughout his life he never knew a day free from pain, were talking together, when the conversation turned upon the life beyond the grave. "What is your idea of heaven, Mr. Wilberforce?" said Hall. And he replied: "My idea of heaven is love. And what is yours, Mr. Hall?" "My idea of heaven is rest, sir, rest." Love and rest, they are both contained in the promise God "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Our thought of heaven is colored by our experience. Every man whose face is turned toward the Kingdom will find that to him heaven is the satisfaction of his deepest need, his supreme desire.

Then with eyes undimmed, we shall look upon the face of God. We shall take to our arms again those whom death has stolen from us. And then we shall say to our Father: "Sometimes I thought thou hadst forgotten me; and all the while thou wast preparing this for me. Truly my cup runneth over."

The wall speaks of safety and peace to those who are within. But there are those who stand without. The wall divides. If there is peace and safety within, there is danger and death without. But the wall is pierced by twelve gates, that those who are without may enter; and these gates are never closed. A

wall with gates on every side, that is the picture. What does it mean? The wall excludes, the gate admits. You cannot scale the wall, but you may enter by the gate. You may enter the city of God, but you must enter by the appointed way. It is the new and living way which Jesus has opened to us. Within is the host of those who have been redeemed with precious blood; that blood avails for you. Without are those who reject the Saviour, though he died for them. The wall divides, but the gate invites. Though you stand outside, you may enter, and take your place with the people of God and share the joys of heaven.

II

THE GATES

"Having twelve gates."

Rev. 21:12

The holy city, New Jerusalem, is encircled by a wall great and high; the wall is pierced with twelve gates. The wall signifies separation. It divides those within from those without. To those who are within, the wall signifies safety, peace; to those who are without it is a threat of danger and of death. The line is clearly and sharply drawn, and the wall is impregnable. Yet there is a way by which those who are without may enter. It is the way of the gate. If the wall means exclusion, the gate means welcome. If the wall forbids, the gate invites. And the gates are always open.

There are only two classes of men recognized by Scripture, those who are within the Kingdom of God and those who are without. The wall represents the boundary of the Kingdom. The day is coming for the individual and the race when the line of division shall be forever fixed. At death we enter upon our eternal state. The earthly life determines the nature of the life beyond the grave. "All that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." John 5: 28, 29. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat

of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." II Cor. 5:10. Langauge could not affirm more plainly and emphatically that the basis of the final judgment is the present life. The Master has warned us. "Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Why are they not able? Because they come too late. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke 13:24-27. Then is the great gulf fixed that none may cross. And in that day it shall be said, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still."

But till that day the gates are wide open, and whosoever will may come. The wicked may turn to God. "His blood can make the foulest clean," and in that blood the sinner may wash his robes that he may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gate into the city. If the wall seems to shut him out, the gate lets him in.

There are gates on every side. How vast, how catholic is the Kingdom of God. This New Jerusalem is not the home of the Jew alone, but of mankind. Men of every race and kindred are gathered here. "They bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it"—all nations. There is room and welcome for all the tribes of earth. There are three gates on the east, looking toward China, India, Japan, with their teeming myriads of souls. There is a place for this vast multitude in the Kingdom of God, and already they are coming. The vanguard of the mighty host has entered through the gates of pearl into the city of God. There are three gates on the north, and through them our ancestors found entrance to the Kingdom, the men of Britain and Normandy and the German forests, as far as the frozen regions toward the pole. There are three gates on the south, where three great continents, Africa, Australia, South America, shall yield their sons and daughters unto God. There are three gates on the west. The new world is as near the Kingdom as the old. From every side the nations are streaming into the city in numbers fast increasing from year to year. The multitude that no man can number is fashioned out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues under the whole heaven. The Kingdom is a magnet that draws to itself all that is worthy in the life and achievements of men. Every race contributes its choicest and its best to adorn and enrich the city of God. The Anglo-Saxon is there with his indomitable energy and love of

freedom and inventive genius; the Latin, with his sense of beauty and artistic skill; the Chinaman, with his practical sagacity and patient toil; the Slav, with his stubborn tenacity; the Japanese, with mind quick, eager, alert; the Hindu, with his subtle thought and brooding soul and mystic temper; the Jew with his marvelous vitality and spirit of mastery, crowned with the promises of God. In him who bought them with his blood, they are all one in the holy city, "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all." Widely as they differ, they are one in him, and his name is written upon them every one.

The city lies open to all ages. There are gates on the east; the Kingdom opens toward the cradle. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," said the Master; "forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God." And again he said, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." What a throng of little children is ceaselessly pressing into the Kingdom! Set the cradle close beside the open gate. Teach your children from their earliest years that they belong to God, that Christ died for them, that the Kingdom is theirs if they will enter. They may learn to love God as soon as they learn to love their mother, and from the beginning of conscious life may be trained to walk in his ways and do his will. It is our glad faith that all who die in infancy are saved through the grace of Christ, and he is con-

tinually gathering them in his arms as he delighted to do in the days of his flesh. Then he blessed them and the blessing still abides. Whom the Master blesses, none may curse.

There are gates on the west. Some of us have left the days of childhood far behind. But no matter where you may be on life's journey, there is a gate near by. While life remains, there is always an open gate before you. If we find it harder to enter the Kingdom as we grow older, it is not because the gates are fewer, or because the gates are closed. The change is in ourselves. The gates are as many as before, and as inviting as before, but we are less inclined to enter. The holy city loses the charm it once had for us as we fall under the power of sin. But the gates are wide open still. God does not close the gate against the sinner, but the sinner may close his heart against God. Let us thank God that there are as many gates toward the sunset as toward the sunrise. This side of death it is never too late to enter. The way to the Kingdom is as open to the old man as to the little child. Whatever your age, your condition, your experience, your sin, there is an open gate just before you by which God invites you to enter into life eternal. Every man's life opens on the Kingdom.

Who are they that stand outside? This is the shameful company: "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." If such as these were suffered to

enter, they would defile and pollute the city with their presence. It would be no longer holy, no longer the New Jerusalem, but would bear the likeness of that old city against which the Lord Jesus launched the woes which were so terribly fulfilled.

"What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?" Without holiness no man shall see the Lord; how then shall these find a place within the wall? "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart." "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," is the sentence of the Judge in the great Day. "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." If the city shall be holy surely there can be no place there for such as these, stained with the foulest vices and crimes.

Yet as we look upon the multitude gathered within the wall of the New Jerusalem, we observe what a motley company it is. The first named among those that stand without are the dogs. Dog is a term of dislike and contempt in the Scriptures, as it is throughout the East to this day. No more offensive name may be applied to a man, for it designates him as unclean and disgusting. "Beware of the dogs," wrote Paul to the Philippians, warning them against the false teachers who would lead them astray. The term was commonly applied by the

Jews to the Gentiles; and our Lord seemed to sanction that use of the word when in order to test the faith of the Syrophœnician woman he said to her, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." In this city that bears the name of Jerusalem what room is there for the Gentiles who were accounted no better than dogs? Yet the city is filling fast with Gentiles from every quarter of the earth. This is the New Jerusalem, where there is no more Jew or Gentile, but all are one in Christ. All peoples and races have an equal place in the city of God.

"Without are the sorcerers." But are there no sorcerers here? Is not this the company of those who were accustomed to practice magical arts in Ephesus, but moved by the preaching of Paul brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all the multitude to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver? And is not this Simon Magus, who in Samaria used sorcery, and was named by the people "that power of God which is called Great"; the man who recognized in the apostles a might beyond his own, and sought to purchase it with money, seeking the power without the holiness of the Spirit, and was rebuked and condemned by Peter: "Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be

forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity"? Then Simon feared and said to Peter, "Pray ye for me to the Lord, that none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me." Is this Simon Magus standing here? I think it is, but I am not sure. How many sorcerers are here, who practiced evil arts in heathen lands, priests, medicine men, witch doctors, crafty, cunning, murderous? "Without are sorcerers"—but they are found within too, a host of them from every land beneath the sun.

"Without are the fornicators, and the murderers." The duty of chastity, the sanctity of human life, are first principles in the ethics of the Kingdom. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." I Cor. 6: 18. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Murder is the crime without remedy. For many offenses atonement may be made, the damage inflicted may be repaired. But no satisfaction can be made for murder. Surely then there can be no place for the fornicator and the murderer in the holy city. But who is this that leads the great chorus of praise which rises unceasingly before the throne? It is David, the king, sweet singer of Israel, whose psalms have brought cheer and comfort to the hearts of God's people for three thousand years—David, the adulterer, who stole Bath-sheba from her husband, and sent brave and loyal Uriah to his death—David,

stained with the basest crimes. And who is this about whom so many are eagerly gathered that they may look upon his face and hear his words? This is Saul of Tarsus, who also is called Paul. His hands were red with the blood of the saints. Hear him tell the story. "I persecuted this Way unto the death." "When they were put to death I gave my vote against them." "When the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting and keeping the garments of them that slew him." And a great company of those whose lives were blackened with these foul sins are gathered here with David and with Paul. "Without are the fornicators, and the murderers"—but many of them are within too, men who on earth were guilty of the most heinous sins toward God and man.

"Without are the idolaters." Idolatry is the last extremity of sin. All sins besides are transgressions of the law of God, idolatry presumes to dethrone him. Surely there can be no room for idolaters in this city, where he reigns supreme and receives the glad homage of the universe. Yet who is this imposing figure? Is not this King Solomon, who restored idolatry when it was virtually extinct in Israel, who forsook the God of his fathers to go after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammorites; who built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Am-

mon? And is this not Manasseh, wayward son of the good king Hezekiah, who built again the high places which his father had destroyed, and reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab, king of Israel, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served them? He did not shrink from profaning the Temple itself with that worship, for "He built altars in the house of Jehovah, whereof Jehovah said, In Jerusalem will I put my name; and he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah . . . And he set the graven image of Asherah, that he had made, in the house of which Jehovah said to David and Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever." II Kings 21: 3-7. And as if there were no bounds to his wickedness "he made his son to pass through the fire, and practised augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards." And yet further, that his cup of iniquity might be filled to overflowing, he "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." He seemed to have heaped upon himself all the guilt of which man is capable. Yet the writer of II Chronicles tells us that he too found his way into the Kingdom of God. If these men may enter the holy city, these men who not only themselves wandered far from God, but turned the whole nation to the worship of false gods, what idolater is there who may not hope to find a place there? And a great army of idolaters

from every corner of the earth is streaming through the gates of pearl and treading the golden streets, and singing the song of the Lamb that was slain. Worshipers of every false God known to men are now numbered among the saints of the Most High. "Without are the idolaters"—but they are within too, a mighty army which shall not cease to grow until all the ransomed are gathered home.

"Without is . . . every one that loveth and maketh a lie." All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death. Falsehood is of the Devil. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." John 8: 44. Liars are the children of the Devil, how then shall they find a place in the Kingdom of God? But who is this commanding figure? It is Abraham, who wears the loftiest titles ever conferred upon a son of man; father of the faithful, friend of God. Yet Abraham, in fear of death, twice surrendered Sarah, his wife, with a lie. And who are these beside him? Isaac and Jacob. "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, liars every one. And this is Peter, who told the basest lie in history, the lie that can never be repeated, who denied the Master who was on his way to the cross for him, denied him with cursing and swearing; "I do not know the man, I swear I do not know him, may God curse me if I know him." And heaven is full of

men and women who on earth lifted up their souls unto falsehood and swore deceitfully. How many are there indeed who have never turned aside to lies, or sought shelter in falsehood when they feared to speak the truth? "Without are the liars"—but there is a host of them within too, and few are they who dare affirm, "My lips have always obeyed the law of truth."

"Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." Yet a great company of them is found within the wall. Every class that is named as excluded has a host of representatives amid the multitude of the redeemed. There is no sin so black, no crime so abominable that it may not be laid to the charge of some of those who stand before the throne of God. What does it mean? It means that sin shuts no man out of heaven, else heaven would be empty, for all they who have entered there are sinners, and many of them were sinners of the deepest dye. There is no sin that men may commit that they have not committed, no depths of iniquity that they have not fathomed. Their lips were foul, their hearts were black, their hands were stained with blood. Liars, fornicators, murderers, idolaters, they are all here. Sin excludes no man from the Kingdom, else none could enter. What is it then that shuts men out? It is sin unrepented of and unforgiven. How did these sinners who throng the streets of the Celestial City find the way to enter? "Blessed are

they who do his commandments," we read in the Authorized Version; but the Revised Version reads, "Blessed are they who wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city." In what fountain of cleansing shall they wash their robes with all the stains of earth upon them? In the blood of the Lamb. By that blood they are redeemed, in that blood they are cleansed. They enter heaven not through any merit of their own, not arrayed in their own righteousness, but through the infinite merit and clad in the perfect righteousness of the Son of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." These are sinners who fill the courts of heaven, but they are sinners repentant, forgiven, blood bought, blood washed. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and serve him day and night in his temple, and rejoice before him with exceeding and eternal joy.

As we look upon this company we may ask, If there is room for such as these in the Kingdom of God, who may not hope to enter? You may have been a great sinner, may have committed the most

heinous crimes. You cannot be a greater sinner than many of these have been, you cannot bear a heavier load of guilt than that which rested upon them. No matter what your sin may be, you may find here in this goodly company of the redeemed not one, but many who sinned just as you have sinned, whose offense was precisely the same as yours, who provoked God and injured their fellow men in exactly the same way as you have done. Every sin that you have committed, or could ever commit, has been committed times without number by those that are now numbered among the people of God. They sinned, but they repented, they turned to him who taketh away the sin of the world, and their sins were forgiven for his name's sake. The condition of life in the first paradise was obedience; the condition of coming to the tree of life in the paradise above is repentance and faith, the faith that overcomes through the blood of the Lamb. There is no sin so grievous that it will shut you out of the Kingdom of God if you draw near in penitence and faith to him who said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

The city is surrounded by a wall great and high. But the wall is pierced by twelve gates. The wall speaks of separation, division; the gates speak of admission, welcome. If the wall would shut us out, the gate lets us in. We may enter, but we must enter by the appointed way, which is Christ Jesus. None may enter but through him, through him all may enter. There are two ways by which men seek

to enter into life, the way of justice and the way of mercy. There are those who would enter heaven by self-righteousness and good works. He who fulfills the law has no need of grace; heaven is his of right. But the law requires perfect obedience. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." A single sin puts men outside the pale of the law, and incurs its condemnation. Christ is the divine standard, and he who would reach heaven by the way of justice must present before God a life as perfect as his. The way of justice is the way of death; the way of mercy is the way of life. The Pharisee prayed, "God, be just to me the righteous;" the publican prayed, "God, be merciful to me the sinner," and "went down to his house justified rather than the other." Not by the way of justice but only by the way of mercy which is opened to us in Christ Jesus may we hope to enter the Kingdom of God. Justice is the wall around the city, mercy is the open gate.

III

THE IMMORTAL DEAD

The dead man touching the bones of Elisha revived.
II Kings 13:21

Miracles are not numerous in the Scriptures. You may find more of them in the biography of a single saint than in all the sacred story. Ordinarily God fulfills his purpose through the medium of the laws and forces which he has ordained. But he is not bound by them; he is not entangled in a network which his own hands have woven. Sometimes he makes bare his arm and supersedes the common processes of nature, that men may look beyond nature to nature's Lord. God is in the world, but God is above it, too. Scripture portrays at once the immanent and the transcendent God. In this variety of method the divine wisdom conspicuously appears. Faith in the uniformity of nature is essential to all our knowledge, to all our activity. All our calculations are based upon it. That the course of nature will pursue its unvarying round, that the sun will tread its wonted path through the heavens, that the seasons will come and go with the interchange of seedtime and harvest, that the properties of matter and of spirit abide evermore all unchanged—upon these assumptions our hopes and purposes are builded. Else to-morrow might usher us into a new world, where all our past experience would be confounded. If miracles were so frequent as to shatter

or disturb our faith in the constancy of nature, they would tear away the ground on which we stand, rob us of the principles by which life is governed, destroy the motives of industry, and lead us from the realm of law to the realm of chance. But on the other hand if that uniformity were never broken, we might conclude that there is no power in the universe higher than the forces to which we have grown accustomed. If miracles were common we might lose faith in nature; if they were wanting, we might lose faith in God. There are miracles, but they are few, that we may believe alike in nature and in nature's God.

The Old Testament records about fifty miracles. Few as they are they are not equally distributed, but are gathered in clusters about certain illustrious names and memorable epochs. Four fifths of them were wrought during two notable eras, which together embrace not more than one hundred and twenty years—the era of the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, and the days of Elijah and Elisha. Those were critical times and God interposed with strong hand and outstretched arm for the salvation of his people.

The story of the text furnishes the only instance in Scripture of a miracle wrought through the dead. Ordinarily God works through the living. But God can use the bones of the dead as well as the voice of the living prophet. The purpose of the miracle is evidence when we recall the circumstances of the time. A succession of weak and wicked kings had

brought Israel to the verge of ruin. Year by year the Moabites were accustomed to invade and ravage the land. During one of their incursions this incident took place. As a company of Israelites were engaged in burying a man they spied a band of Moabites appoaching, and hurriedly thrust the corpse into the tomb of Elisha. When the man touched the bones of the prophet he revived and stood up on his feet. Obviously the miracle would give new weight and power to the words of Elisha, as if he spake again from the grave. God sets his seal to the message of the prophet. The evils were rife, the perils imminent, against which Elisha had warned the people, and now, though dead, he lifted up his voice and from the sepulcher called them to repentance.

But the miracle taught a lesson yet more important. Elisha is dead, but Elisha's God lives. His power is not broken because a poor human instrument has fallen from his hand. When the king wept over the face of the dying prophet he cried, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" For Elisha had been the strength of Israel, the bulwark of the state. Yet not Elisha, but Elisha's God. On the tomb of John Wesley in Westminster Abbey is the inscription, "God buries the workman but carries on the work." When the soul of Mohammed passed away the people would not believe that he was dead. "How can he be dead, our witness, our intercessor, our mediator with God? He is not dead; like Moses and

Jesus he is wrapped in a holy trance, and speedily will he return to his faithful people." Omar threatened to strike off the head of him who should dare to affirm that the prophet was no more. But Abubeker cried, "Is it Mohammed or the God of Mohammed whom you worship? The God of Mohammed liveth forever, but the apostle was a mortal like ourselves." God will not suffer us to rest in men. After Elijah comes Elisha, after Elisha comes God,

> "God fulfills himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The Kingdom of heaven does not move in a circle. It has its routine, it has its surprises too. Through teaching, through miracles, by the hand of the living and by the hand of the dead, the will of God is done.

The text furnishes an illustration in the physical sphere of a spiritual truth. The power of life does not terminate with death. The grave is not a place of darkness and emptiness. A thousand streams of power flow from it to bless or curse the world. There is no tongue so eloquent, no hand so mighty as those upon which death has set its solemn seal, clothing them with a sanctity beyond the power of life to bestow. The most potent forces that operate upon the hearts of men and shape the fortunes of the race emanate from the grave. Consider the law of heredity. Body and soul are a heritage, transmitted

from a long line of ancestry. Inclination, disposition, temperament, whence come they? They are no new creation, they are our inheritance. Inquire whence you have derived your physical and mental characteristics, your features, constitution, tendencies, and you may find the secret of them buried in some long-forgotten grave. The souls of the departed live again in us, their children. Men are bound in fetters of appetite and passion that were forged centuries ago. As a storm a thousand miles out at sea drives the swell and surge of the Atlantic upon our coast, so we are borne upon the rush and sweep of forces that were begotten when the world was young. The fingers of the dead are always playing upon our hearts and evoking the music and the discords of our lives. The living must own the sway of those from whom soul and body are derived, in whom we were fashioned generations before we were born.

The law holds good upon the largest scale. The world in which we live is the work of ghostly fingers. What have we that the dead have not given us? What do we know that the dead have not taught us? What are we that the dead have not made us? Plato and Aristotle fill the chair of philosophy in every college in Christendom. Hannibal and Cæsar still ride the storms of war, and muster contending hosts to battle. Every day Socrates is propounding questions and teaching morals in market places and on the street corners. The will of Peter the Great, if we may trust tradition, has dictated the policy of

Russia for two hundred years, and the fortunes of that mighty empire lay in the grasp of skeleton fingers. Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Webster are potent in the councils of the Republic to-day. John Marshall administers justice upon the bench of the Supreme Court. If we are lifted higher and see further than our fathers, it is because we have climbed upon their shoulders. The living execute the mandates of the mighty dead—

> "The dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns."

Moses gives law to the civilized world after thirty centuries have passed. In every worshiping congregation David leads the song of praise, and Peter and Paul and John preach the gospel every Sunday in ten thousand pulpits. Hush the voices of the dead and the sweetest music of earth would be put to silence.

The law prevails in individual experience. "The life of the dead," said Cicero, "is placed in the memory of the living." We canonize the dead. Every household, every heart has its saints. We strew their graves with flowers, we keep their memory green in our hearts.

> "That's hallowed ground where mourned and missed
> The lips repose our love has kissed;
> But where's their memory's mansion? Is't
> Yon church-yard's bowers?
> No! In ourselves their souls exist,
> A part of ours."

When the sacred writer would incite us to patient endurance and strenuous endeavor in the Christian race, next to the vision of Jesus, who himself on earth trod this way before us, and now in heaven waits to award the prize, he finds no more inspiring thought than the great cloud of witnesses that compass us about, the spirits of the departed, who look down upon us from the heights which they have won. How many are there who have said with Mark Antony, as the earth was heaped upon the lifeless clay, "My heart is in the coffin there." The most sacred memories, the most potent inspirations known to earth are those which center in the grave. Trace to their sources the influences that have molded your character and shaped your life, and they lead you to the resting places of the dead. If I should ask you what are the mightiest forces that play upon your life to-day, whither would you lead me? Not to your place of business, not to the house of God, not even to your home, with its empty seats at the table, its broken circle—you would lead me from the haunts of the living to some quiet spot where the dead are sleeping, the little country churchyard or the crowded cemetery of the great city, and pointing to the name engraved on headstone or monument, would say, "The man, the woman, who made me, who is making me, what I am, lies there." The worship of saints, the veneration of relics, is only a mistaken recognition of the truth that "the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

In his "Philosophy of the Christian Religion," Principal Fairbairn tells us of his own experience. "He who writes these things once knew a man who was to him companion, friend, and more than brother. They lived, they thought, they argued together; together they walked on the hillside and by the seashore; they had listened to the wind as it soughed through the trees and to the multitudinous laughter of the waves as they broke upon the beach; together they had watched the purple light which floated radiant above the heather and together they had descended into the slums of a great city, where no light was nor any fragrance, and had faced the worst depravity of our kind. Each kept hope alive in the other and stimulated him to high endeavor and better purpose; but though the same week saw the two friends settled in chosen fields of labor, the one settled only to be called home, the other to remain and work his tale of toil until his longer day be done. But the one who died seemed to leave his spirit behind in the breast of the man who survived; and he has lived ever since, and lives still, feeling as if the soul within him belonged to the man who died." And he adds, "May we not say this experience is common and interprets the experience of the race?" Surely we can all testify from our own experience that the influence of those we loved was not buried in the grave but abides with us in sanctifying and inspiring power. Therefore is it "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all"?

What is true of those who have gone before is true of us. "I shall not all die," said the old Roman. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die," said the Master, "it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." Life is a seed that must be sown before it will yield its harvest. The power of life is not exhausted in the few fleeting years that we sojourn in the flesh. We cannot put forth the full measure of our strength until the earth has closed above us. We shall live in other hearts, work on in other lives that we shall move and fashion in generations yet unborn. We are the bridge that shall transmit the past to the future, and to-morrow shall have nothing but what is given by to-day.

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."

Even as our Master wrought for a few years in the flesh and now and forever carries on his work through those in whom his Spirit dwells, in whom he lives again, so do we, in our small way, on our humble scale, spend a little time in the labor of the flesh and thereafter wield a larger power and carry on a greater work through those whose lives have been molded and kindled by ours. The torch of knowledge, of liberty, of religion is passed from hand to hand throughout the generations of men, and because we were faithful in our place the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. We do not cease to serve when we cease to live. Of us shall be born

"The crowning race
Of those that eye to eye shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is nature like an open book;
. . . . . .
No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit."

The story of Elijah illustrates this truth. His magnificent victory on Carmel, where he contended alone against a host and overcame them in the power of God, seemed barren of result. Even he, the man of iron, lost heart and fled. He cried with Isaiah, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought." But was there no fruit of that bold and earnest ministry? What was the greatest work that Elijah wrought? It was not the smiting of the land with drought, it was not the slaughter of the priests of Baal. The noblest work of Elijah was Elisha. God gave him to train his successor, that when the prophet's mantle fell from his shoulders it might rest upon one who was worthy to wear it. God prepared Elisha for the service of the Kingdom through Elijah. Though a man of very different temper, he was made partaker of the spirit of his master, and the new prophet caught the inspiration of the old. The spirit of Elijah lived again in him, never ceased from Israel, and nine hundred years later flamed forth in the fiery zeal of John the Baptist. Thus the Kingdom grows in orderly progression. No gener-

ation, no man, is isolated and distinct. Each is a link in the chain, springing out of that which precedes, leading on to that which follows. The greatest work that any man can accomplish is to train a successor, that his work shall not die with him. The tree not only yields its own fruit but gives birth to other trees, and the harvest is propagated far and wide. So

> "May I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again,
> In minds made better by their presence—
> Whose music is the gladness of the world."

Influence after death is in line with the influence of the life. Elijah's ministry was destructive, Elisha's was beneficent. It was Elisha's body, as we should expect, that with a touch restored the dead to life. There is a law of spiritual inertia. We set in motion forces that work on forever in straight lines. With death our influence escapes us and we have no power to increase or lessen it or alter its direction by a hair's breadth. "Gather up my influence and bury it with me," cried a young man on his deathbed, but he cried in vain. As soon call back the ripples that the stone makes in the quiet lake, as soon still the throbbing of the air when smitten with the sound of thunder, as reclaim the influence of a life. While the thought is in your heart, while the word is in your mouth, while the deed is in your hand, it is yours. You may give it or withhold. But once the thought is expressed, once the word is spoken, once the deed is done, they are

yours no longer. The influence that has gone out from us into the great world we can no more recall than the river can recall the waters that it has poured into the sea. Now we are determining the nature of the power that we shall exercise upon the world to the end of time. Now we are shaping the forces that shall soon break away from our control to enter upon their mission of cursing or of blessing. We have read in Eastern tales of men who called up spirits from the vasty deep, and trembled before them when they appeared, terrified at the success of their incantations. Often should we fear if, from the undiscovered future, we could call up the spirits that we to-day are loosing from their prison house, the forces that we are setting in motion to work upon the hearts of men. How solemn is the thought, what I am here I shall be forever; what I do here I shall do forever. Are you willing that all the future shall bear the impression of the present? Are you willing to be, to do, forever, what you are doing now? Are you walking where you would have your children tread in your footsteps? Are you leading the life that you would have them lead? Though a man be careless of his own life, let him think of the lives that are bound up with his. God has united us with strong cords of interest and affection as men are fastened together when they climb the Alps, that if one slip and fall his companions may hold him fast; but sometimes it happens that the rope which was designed for safety proves their destruction, and they drag each other down to death. God has knit

our hearts and lives together with innumerable bonds that we may help one another, that each may profit by the strength of all. But this very kinship, the very closeness of the ties that unite us, gives power to evil as to good. The opportunity to help is no less an opportunity to harm. The thought may well give us pause, if we are treading the ways of sin. The disposition, the temper, the habits that are mine I shall bequeath to my children, and through them the evil of my life shall bear its bitter fruit long after I am gone.

Let this teach us something of the greatness and dignity of life. There are many who live ignobly because they are persuaded that it matters little how they live. They lack motive, incentive, inspiration. In this vast world, of what account is one little life? What can it accomplish? It is no more than a single drop in the boundless sea, a leaf in the forest, and when it falls the great world swings on unmoved. It can serve no higher purpose than to sport away its little hour and cease to be. We are all beset at times by thoughts like these. We feel the need of the quickening power of high ideals, something to make us realize that life is not a bare struggle for existence or an aimless round of pleasure. Upon this point the word of God labors continually. Here the Lord Jesus put forth the utmost of his strength. The human soul is the noblest work of God. It is the one creation of the Almighty into which he put himself. The heavens and the earth are the work of his fingers, but the soul of man is the breath of his

Spirit. Into the form of clay he breathed something of himself, and man became a living soul. He is godlike, immortal, with dominion over all God's handiwork; not God's creature only but his child, made in the Father's likeness, partaker of the Father's nature. He is clothed with power to shape the issues of the future, even to lay hands upon eternity. Something of the divine energy is given him, the power to work not for to-day alone or to-morrow, but for all time, forever. You may build your life work into the eternal and all glorious Kingdom of God. You can do little, but that little shall be multiplied by eternity. Eternity is the harvest field of time, heaven is the harvest field of earth. Be not content to live one life alone. You may continue to serve God on earth long after you have entered upon the richer service of the heavenly Kingdom. To leave behind us a cherished memory, an example that shall be an inspiration, that shall make for truth and righteousness in all coming time, and then with character developed and powers trained by the discipline of earth to bear a part in that larger, nobler service, which the redeemed above are permitted to render, glorifying God by an enduring ministry on earth and an unending service in heaven—surely this is enough to meet the highest aspirations of the soul. Let not our thought of life be bounded by the narrow horizon of earth and time. It reaches farther—beyond time to eternity, beyond earth to heaven, beyond man to God. There is no limit that can be set to the power of an endless life.

The Kingdom of God on earth is built up by the labors of men and women like ourselves. The world shall be what we have made it under God. And when the mighty web of history has been woven to completion, God shall trace in it the thread of each individual life. Not one who has wrought in the service of the Kingdom shall fail of his reward. And not earth alone but heaven shall be the richer by reason of our lives. In the great chorus of praise that rises unceasingly before the throne of the Lamb voices bear a part that we have taught to sing. Amid the innumerable host that throng the golden streets there are those whom we were permitted by God's grace to lead through the gates of pearl. In the crown of the great Redeemer are jewels that our hands have set there. How many in the Church below, how many in the Church above, will testify, It was the word, the example, the life of parent or teacher or pastor or friend that led me to the Saviour? Every true servant of God makes earth better and heaven brighter by his life. Living or dying, he is the Lord's, and while he lives and after his eyes are closed in death God shall work through him his holy will.

To each one of us is granted a twofold immortality, an immortality of influence on earth, an immortality of life in heaven. While the soul of Elisha rejoiced in presence of his God, his body wrought wonders among men. That is the figure of a universal and eternal truth. We shall live there with God, we shall live here with men. So live as they should live who live forever.

IV

THE DIVIDED WATERS

"And it came to pass, . . . when they that bare the ark were come unto the Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (for the Jordan overfloweth all its banks all the time of harvest), that the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up in one heap, a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho."

Josh. 3:14-16

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel have come to the border of the Land of Promise. But before them rolls a river deep and wide. Under ordinary conditions the Jordan is not a formidable stream; but in the springtime when it is swollen by the melting snows of Mount Hermon, it overflows its banks, and becomes a raging torrent, rushing in mad haste to the Dead Sea. The fords are impassable; there are no boats, no bridges. The strongest swimmer might well fear to venture into that angry flood. How then shall this great host be transported to the other side, this army of men with women and children and flocks and herds? It was a task beyond the power of man to perform. God took it in hand. He has not delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, and preserved them amid the perils of the desert, to forsake them now. He bids Joshua marshal the people in long procession, the priests with the ark of God going

before them. And the promise is given, "When the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of Jehovah, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, even the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand in one heap." The ranks are formed in obedience to the divine command, the word is given, and the mighty host begins to wend its way toward the rushing river. As they draw near doubts and fears arise in their hearts. The Jordan rolls its turbid flood between them and the land of Canaan. The fury of the waters shows no sign of abatement. But the priests lead on. They have almost reached the brink of the river, and still there is no divine interposition. Still the waters rush madly to the sea. Then their feet touch the water, and in a moment the miracle is wrought, the torrent is stayed. God calls, Halt. He speaks not to the people, but to the waters, and the waters hear and obey. In a moment a path is opened through the flood, and the people pass over right against Jericho. We need not stop to inquire whether this arrest of the waters was due to natural causes. Are not the laws and forces of nature in the hand of God? Are they not the expression of his purpose and the servants of his will? Whatever may have been the immediate cause, it was by the hand of God that the waters above were dammed up, while the waters below roll swiftly on, leaving a broad pathway by which the great host journey in safety to the Promised Land.

Let us fix our thoughts upon a single feature of the story, the time of the miracle. When the feet of the priests touch the waters the flood is divided, not before. Here is another instance of that divine economy to which many of the miracles bear witness. When Jesus fed the five thousand, he bade his disciples gather up the fragments that nothing should be lost. Here God does not interfere until the decisive moment. He will not interrupt the course of nature an instant sooner or an instant longer than the necessity of the case requires. The waters are divided at the last possible moment, and as soon as the people have crossed over the stream it returns to its accustomed channel. There is a divine parsimony even in the working of miracles. God interposes not to supersede but to supplement the activity of men. They must do what they can. He will do for them no more than is necessary. The miracle is bounded by their ability. He will do for us by direct interposition only what we cannot do ourselves.

The journey of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is often made the figure of the Christian life, the journey from the bondage of sin to the heavenly home. After recounting various features of the march of Israel through the wilderness, Paul says, "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." I Cor. 10:11. Every incident is significant. Every miracle has its lesson. This the Church has always recog-

nized, and many of our most beautiful hymns draw their imagery and their inspiration from the record of these days: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"; "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"; and our conceptions of death and the life beyond are shaped and colored by the Jordan River and the land of Canaan. Our thought of life and death and the world to come is largely determined by the story of these forty years, beginning with the Exodus and closing with the happy entrance into the land promised to their fathers.

Miracles are signs, as John delights to call them. They are not merely wonders, that startle for the moment, meteors that flash out with sudden splendor and go out in darkness. A miracle is a sign, the outstretched finger of God pointing to some truth that may escape us in the ordinary course of his providence, and must be thrust upon us in some extraordinary way. The miracle has a value therefore far beyond the relief of an immediate need. It conveys a truth of enduring importance. The miracle itself may minister to a passing necessity, the truth that the miracle enshrines ministers to the minds and hearts of every generation while time endures.

What is the lesson which this story holds for us? God parts the waters when the feet of the priests touch the river, at the exact time. If we follow the ark of the covenant of our God, every hindrance shall be overcome, every difficulty surmounted,

every barrier broken down. But only as we come face to face with them, not before.

The truth branches out into a great variety of applications, for it is as broad as life itself, and touches every interest and relation.

We may apply it to the cares and anxieties that beset us. It is not the troubles we bear but those we fear that wear us out. We can endure to-day, but we are afraid of to-morrow. Our fears are always reaching forward and dragging to-morrow into to-day. We shudder at the thought of what may lie hidden in the mists that veil the future from our sight. Our fancies create our fears. Every man is strong enough for to-day, no man is strong enough for to-morrow. But as if the present task were not sufficient, we heap upon it regret for yesterday and anxiety for to-morrow, and go staggering on under the threefold burden. Upon many a tombstone this inscription might be written—Died of trying to bear the burden of three days with the strength of one. It was said of a certain man after his death, that he had many troubles, but most of them never came. A friend of mine was taken with what threatened and proved to be a long and lingering illness. As he lay upon his bed, he asked his physician, "Doctor, how long must I lie here?" And the physician wisely replied, "Just one day at a time." It was a word fitly spoken, and my friend told me that it comforted and strengthened him in the long days of suffering that followed.

We cannot cross the river until we come to it, and

the waters are not divided until our feet touch the brink. Because we forget this, sometimes our prayers simply beat the air. We pray for strength to meet the burdens before they come. We ask to see the waters part when we are yet a great way off. We would feel strong enough to-day for the work of to-morrow. But God gives us strength as he gives us bread. He does not fill the storehouse and say, "Here is food enough for a year." Day by day he would have us seek from his hand our daily bread. There was a man who said, "I have much goods laid up for many years"; but God called him a fool. Our bread, our life he gives us; and he says to us, "Wait upon me continually, and your wants shall be supplied as they arise." He will not give us strength for to-morrow until to-morrow comes, nor part the waters until we reach the shore. You may pray and groan and toss about all night upon your bed, but you will not have strength for to-morrow until to-morrow dawns. You cannot cross the river until you come to it, and not until you come to it will the waters divide. Let us go on as God leads, and trust him to open the way. We want to see the waters divide as soon as we come in sight of them, but that is not God's method. Go as far as you can, and God will lead you further.

"Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." To-morrow will have its own anxieties; why anticipate them? Let each day be charged with the care of its own

troubles. Between the days are set the hours of darkness and of rest. In sleep we roll off the burdens of to-day, and recruit our strength for the burdens of to-morrow. Let us not by our foolish fears break down the barrier that divides the days, and suffer the cares and anxieties of the future to rush in upon us like a flood. What lies before us we do not know, but whatever befalls us God is our Leader, and at his word of command the waters shall divide and the way shall be opened.

We often shrink from the thought of duty. Sometimes duty wears a forbidding face. Obligations are laid upon us that are distasteful. We shrink from them. We say, "I can never do it." We look forward days or weeks and the task looms up in huge proportions, as objects are magnified in a fog. We are burdened with the sense of duty that we feel we must do yet cannot do. We draw back, we are afraid. But if we are not to shirk and play the coward, there is only one course open to us. We must march up to the appointed task, however formidable, however irksome it may appear, and lay hold on it and perform it. Often when we have mustered up our courage and come face to face with the dreaded task, we have found that the phantom of our fears was only a scarecrow. We are like children who shudder as they see ghosts in the darkness, terrible creatures with nodding heads and waving arms. But if they are bold enough to draw near, they find a cow placidly grazing in the meadow, or the family wash flapping on the line.

Who has not been confronted with a duty from which he shrank with his whole heart, which he could scarcely bring himself to face, but when at length he marched up to it with fear and trembling he found it easy and delightful? There is a picture that represents a storm cloud so vividly that as you look upon the dark and lowering skies it seems that the lightning is about to flash and the thunder to roll. But as you draw near the angry cloud is parted, and a company of angels smile upon you out of the darkness.

Not always indeed is duty found to be a delight when we lay hold of it. Sometimes it remains hard and bitter. We must force ourselves to go through with it. We are tempted to leave it half done, so grievous is the burden. How then is the promise fulfilled? Where is the parting of the waters? This is true—God will make the duty easier, or he will make you stronger. He will lighten the burden or strengthen the back. The waters will divide if you follow the ark of the covenant. You may trust God for that and go on.

When temptation assails us, this promise is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." I Cor. 10:13. "With the temptation." The strength comes with the need. When Satan tempts, God sustains. With the temptation comes the way of escape, "that ye may be able to endure it." The only

way to escape temptation is to meet it and overcome it in the strength that God supplies. Whenever temptation lies athwart our path, God opens the way of escape.

There are those who fear to enter upon the Christian life, lest they should not be able to hold out to the end. Certainly they will not hold out if they never start. They say it is a very serious step to take. Yes, but it is more serious not to take it. They insist upon feeling strong enough for the whole journey before they take the first step. They must be charged with grace sufficient for all the way, like a storage battery, before they will set foot upon the road. But God does not give in that way. If you wait to be filled with strength for all the future before you begin the Christian life, you will wait forever. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," is the promise. Day by day our strength is renewed and grace is given us like the manna in the wilderness, fresh every morning. Each day has its portion sufficient for the day. To-morrow shall bring its own supply. It is a long journey that lies before you. Strength is given step by step. Difficulties will be overcome as they meet you face to face. The waters of every river will divide as your feet touch them. Why not trust in God, and commit yourself to him, and go on as he leads?

All our past experience testifies that this is God's way of dealing with us. He leads us step by step, moment by moment. He meets our needs, overcomes our hindrances, relieves our anxieties, con-

quers our fears, as they confront us one by one. As each day has its appointed task, so it has its sufficient measure of grace. To-day alone is ours. To-morrow is in the hand of God. Let that suffice us. He apportions the duties, the cares, the temptations, the joys, the sorrows of each day as it comes to us, and gives us grace according to all our need. It is the part of wisdom to throw our strength into the duty of to-day, and trust him to care for to-morrow.

There is one last river that we all must cross. It lies between us and the land of peace, our home. Often we shudder as we think of it. The stream is deep, the water is cold, the way is lonely, and it is shrouded in darkness. We do not pass through it like the children of Israel on the way to Canaan, a great army, marching shoulder to shoulder, cheering and encouraging one another as they march along. One by one we go down into the dark river, leaving our friends behind us on the shore. There are many to whom the thought of death is a haunting terror. The shadow of it broods over them continually, and they walk in the horror of great darkness. Some of the best Christians I have ever known "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And there are few, we may be sure, at least of those who reach maturity, who have not at times groaned beneath the bondage of this fear. It is not the pangs of death that we dread, the pains of dissolution, but the darkness, the loneliness, the mystery of it makes us afraid. What lies beyond the veil we fear. Bunyan has painted the closing scenes

of life with his accustomed power. Christian and Hopeful inquire if there is no other way to the Celestial City than the way of the river. The river was very deep, and they were stunned at the sight of it. They were told, "There is another way." "But there hath not any, save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah, been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound." Then they addressed themselves to the water, and Christian beginning to sink cried out, "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me." Hopeful encourages him: "Be of good cheer, my brother: I feel the bottom, and it is good." But poor Christian is in deadly fear. "Ah, my friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about; I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey." And with that a great horror and darkness fell upon him. Hopeful cried, "Brother, I see the gate, and men standing to receive us"; but Christian rejoins, "it is you, it is you they wait for." Then Christian fell into a muse, and Hopeful said, "Be of good cheer; Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." Then the light broke in upon Christian, and he cried with a loud voice, "Oh, I see him again; and he tells me, When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Then they both took courage and soon they stood upon the farther shore. It is a vivid picture of the fears and the sorrows that beset us as we approach the river of death, and of the grace and comfort that

are imparted to us as we pass through the dark waters to the heavenly home. The waters of this river too shall divide as our feet touch the brink. I have known many Christians who were afraid to die; I have never known one who was afraid in the hour of death. While we live we have grace to live; in the latest hour we shall have grace to die. But dying grace will not be given to us until we enter the dark river.

"So I go on not knowing;
I would not if I might;
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I would rather walk with him by faith,
Than walk alone by sight."

Only let us be sure that we are following the ark of the covenant, that we are at peace with God, and seek to order our lives according to his will. Then all the promises are ours.

V

THE INEVITABLE PAST

"God requireth that which is past."

Eccl. 3:15

All things move in circles, says the preacher. He observes that endless repetition is the law of nature and of life, motion without progress. The sun, the wind, the waters alike illustrate the truth. "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where it ariseth. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about toward the north; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again." Nature presents the spectacle of incessant toil, a weary Titan straining at impossible tasks. And the preacher sees here the figure of human life. Sun and wind and rivers have all one message. "All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it." Yet nature has this advantage over man, that it abides eternal. "One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever." The earth in its steadfastness mocks the puny creature of an hour. The labor of to-day is repeated to-morrow. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing

under the sun." There is no pause nor rest. "All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it."

Emerson takes up the thought in his essay on Circles. "The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary picture is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world."

History repeats itself. The nations march in single file, each treading in the footsteps of its predecessors. Precedent, the guiding principle of statesmen and judges, what is it but the hand of the past shaping and directing the present? We constantly appeal to experience as our teacher. What is experience but the past instructing the present? The old mystics carried the thought into the region of the infinite and the eternal, declaring that God is a circle, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

There is no better commentary on many parts of Ecclesiastes, its moods and doubt and sensuality and cynicism, than the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. The thought of the circular movement of history is presented in a most striking and impressive way.

> With Earth's first Clay They did the last Man knead,
> And then of the Last Harvest sowed the Seed:
> And the First Morning of Creation wrote
> What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

This law of nature and of history prevails no less in the individual life. Are we done with the past? Have we broken with it, throwing it aside as a worn-

out garment? We cannot outgrow it, or escape it. We bear it with us continually, a burden that grows heavier with every step.

> "I looked behind to find my past,
> And lo, it had gone before."

Here, too, God requireth that which is past.

How does he require, recall, the past in our own experience? Or, as the Revised Version renders it, "Seek again that which is passed away?"

(1) In memory. A marvelous faculty is memory, a storehouse that is never full. Here, too, man reflects the image of the infinite God. No limit can be set to its capacity. Cardinal Mezzofanti, an Italian of the last century, whom Byron pronounced "a monster of languages," is said to have been familiar with more than fifty, though it is not recorded, I believe, that he ever said anything remarkable in any of them. And history records the names of many men whose feats of memory would be incredible if they were not thoroughly attested.

It is the faculty that binds together our varied experiences and gives to life its unity. Without it the days and hours would each be isolated and distinct, having no conscious relation to one another; life would be a series of disconnected events and experiences; and yesterday would have no meaning for to-day, to-day no link to attach it to to-morrow.

It is a self-acting, automatic register, not of words and deeds alone, but of thoughts and feelings and

sensations and emotions and impressions. Whatever touches the life at any point is recorded here. If you keep a diary you set down what you will, alter and omit at pleasure. The story of the day is shaped and colored to suit your desire. But in this register of memory all things, all thoughts, are recorded exactly as they are, and we have no power to change the record in the least particular. Memory will extenuate nothing, nor set down aught in malice. The record answers precisely to the facts.

It is generally believed by students of psychology that nothing which has been committed to the care of memory is ever lost. The difference between a good and a bad memory lies not in the power to retain but in the power to reproduce. One man's memory is like an attic full of lumber. Articles of every kind are thrown together without order or arrangement, and when there is need of a particular article it cannot be found. But it is there. Somewhere, buried out of sight, it is there; and some day it will come to light. Another man's memory is like a library, indexed and catalogued, and at a moment's notice he can lay his hand upon whatever he needs. The attic keeps its deposit as safely as the library, but does not surrender it as readily.

Memory records everything, retains everything. There are several reasons that lead us to this belief. Singular instances of the power of memory are recorded. A servant girl, in a fit of delirium, was heard to repeat long passages of the Old Testament in the Hebrew. How had this woman gained a

knowledge of that sacred tongue? Upon inquiry it was found that she had lived for a time in a home of a minister, a man of learning, who was accustomed to read aloud every day from the text of the Old Scripture. Those unintelligible sounds were caught up by the memory, treasured for years in some dim recess, and at length under the stimulus of fever were recalled and reproduced, as invisible ink leaps to life at the touch of fire. Our own experience furnishes examples of a similar if less striking sort. We often say, I wonder what brought that back to me, I have not thought it before for years. A strain of music, a lock of hair, an article of dress, a chance encounter, may touch a spring that unlocks the secret chambers of memory, and the buried past again confronts us.

Memory plays strange tricks in dreams. Sleep restores what our waking hours could not recall, and transports us in a moment to scenes that lie far behind us. We thought that we were rid of them, and in the dead of night they return to vex us, ghosts against which no exorcism will avail.

Those who have come face to face with death, and have abandoned all hope of life, tell us that the whole of their past existence seemed to stand out before them, as a far stretching landscape is discovered by a flash of lightning.

Memory records the past, retains the past, reproduces the past. But beyond this it makes the past live again, gives it present reality and power. We not only recall the scenes and incidents of days gone

by, we taste again the sorrows and the joys associated with them. Memory calls to life sensations and emotions with the events from which they sprang. We do not merely recall the past in thought, we live it over again. The heart has its place in memory as well as the understanding; we see, we feel. Memory brings a frown to the brow, a blush to the cheek, a tear to the eye, grief or pleasure to the heart. Spend an hour alone with memory, let your thoughts play freely upon the past, and you will run through the whole range of the emotions.

To those who have grown old, memory is often the only real world. The days of childhood are nearer to them than the life of to-day. The world about them is unreal, spectral, phantasmal, a realm of shadows. The world in which they live is a world that has long been dead, peopled by those whose bones have long since moldered to dust. Only the dead are living, and the living are dead. The present is a dream, only the past preserved in memory is substantial and enduring.

Memory plays therefore a leading part in the pains and pleasures of life. It is the only paradise, says Richter, from which we can never be turned out. It is memory that gives to conscience its power. Hawthorne has pictured this truth in his Fancy's Showbox. As memory turns the pages of her record, conscience smites the sinner to the heart. There are men who would rather endure the last extremity of physical torment than have memory let loose upon them.

Memory spans the grave, and binds together this life and the life beyond. We bear our past with us into eternity. "Son, remember," was the word of Abraham to the careless rich man who in hades lifted up his eyes, being in torments. And how large a place is held by the memories of the past in the bliss of the redeemed. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, the song that commemorates the deliverances of the earthly life. Amid the glories of heaven their thoughts go back to earth, and they chant the praises of the Lamb that was slain, who loved us and gave himself for us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood. The saints above draw their noblest inspiration, their loudest and sweetest songs from the memory of the grace that redeemed them. In presence of the throne they can never forget the cross. The memories of earth kindle the joys of heaven. It is the crucified Redeemer whom they ever love and serve and adore. The new song is inspired by the memories of Calvary: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

(2) God requires the past, recalls it, brings it back, in character.

Life is one. The days and hours are closely knit together. The past is interwoven with the very fiber of our being. We do not leave it behind, we bear it with us in body and spirit. It is part of us. We say that memory loses nothing; it is no less true that life loses nothing. Nothing is lost, all is taken up into

the complex fabric of life. Every event, every experience, every sensation, thought, emotion, passion, purpose, ambition, everything that touches us on any side, is one of the threads with which this intricate web of life is woven. Each has its place, and not one is left out. The web grows steadily and rapidly upon the loom of time.

What is habit but the past persisting, repeating itself, asserting itself, in the present? What is character but the result of past experiences, the stamp which they have impressed upon the spirit? What have we that is not the accumulation of the past? What are we that the past has not made us? Bad habits are the fetters with which the past has bound the present. Many a man spends the days of his youth and strength in forging fetters that shall bind him hand and foot in his later years.

But we must observe further that the present does not simply repeat the past, else there would be no progress; it repeats it with emphasis. To-day is not merely yesterday, it is a greater yesterday; and to-morrow shall be as to-day, but yet more abundant. Habit grows stronger, the ruts wear deeper. We do not simply repeat, we repeat with power. We do the same work, but we do it differently. We are not precisely the same in character, in wisdom, in strength, in virtue to-day that we were yesterday. We are good or bad to-day, we shall be better or worse to-morrow. We are wise or foolish to-day, we shall be wiser or more foolish to-morrow. No day leaves us just as it finds us. Something we have

gained or lost. We have gone forward or backward, for we cannot stand still. Life gathers momentum as it goes, and moves with accelerated speed because it has the impulse of an ever growing past behind it.

The true figure of life then is not the circle, which ever returns upon itself, but the spiral, which ever returns upon itself indeed, but never reaches the point from which it started, rising or falling with each successive revolution, so that with every turn it reaches a higher or lower plane. However similar our days may seem to be, each is upon a higher or lower level than the days that have gone before. Though the task be the same the hand has gained or lost in cunning, and the spirit in fidelity. There is never a moment's halt in the eternal march of the soul.

(3) God requires the past in judgment. "God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

In the picture of the last judgment in the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse, John tells us that he saw "the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." What are these books? We do not think, of course, of records inscribed on paper or parchment. The only record required is memory, in which all the thoughts and deeds of life are registered. Every man must say with Pilate, "What I have written, I

have written." He must bear witness for or against himself. Out of our own mouth shall we be judged.

> "There is no shuffling, there the action lies
> In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled
> Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
> To give in evidence."

As the finger of God turns the pages of memory, conscience pronounces sentence. Memory is our accuser, conscience is our judge. Woe to him in that day, who has no Saviour!

Besides these books which are the memories of men, there is another, the book of life, which is the memory of God. It is a familiar conception. Moses prayed, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Ex. 32:31, 32. And Malachi uses the same figure. "Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name." Mal. 3:16. The book of life is God's remembrance of his people. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee," is God's word to all them that put their trust in him.

The story of every man's life is written twice, upon the pages of his own memory and of the mem-

ory of God. The books are compared and judgment is given. The earthly life determines the eternal state. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." II Cor. 5:10. The buried past shall be raised to life again, and shall confront us at the judgment bar of God.

Thus God requires, recalls, the past in memory, in character, in judgment. We bear it with us forever in this life and the life to come. It follows us like a shadow, it haunts us like a ghost. It fashions the present, shapes the future, and molds the issues of eternity.

What then?

The present is moment by moment becoming the past. The golden hours are falling rapidly into the dark backward and abysm of time. We have no time but the present instant that even while we speak of it is gone. Each moment as it speeds by is a swift messenger that bears to heaven its record. The selfish thought, the unhallowed passion, the careless word, the unkind act; the kindly deed, the holy impulse, the gracious purpose—all these have been borne on the swift wings of the flying moments to God, the Judge of all, and are written in his book of remembrance. "Redeem the time," fill the passing hours with words and deeds that shall bear the scrutiny of heaven, that shall abide the judgment of the great Day, that the last account may be rendered with joy and not with grief. Look carefully

how you walk, lest memory breed remorse. Let the life that now is lay up heavenly treasure for the life to come. If the past is gone beyond recall, the present is ours, and with the help of God we may make it better than the past has been.

But no matter how diligently we may improve the present, how high we may lift it above the past, none the less the past remains, dark and menacing. We bear it with us here, we shall meet it again before the great white throne. What shall we do with it? How shall we escape the condemnation with which it threatens us? Bring it to God and ask him to forgive it. There is no other way of escape.

> "The Moving Finger writes; and having writ
> Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it."

That is true, terribly true. But blessed be God, there is a power as far above our piety and wit and tears as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is the grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. How many and gracious are the promises given to the penitent soul. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more."

"The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

God requires, shall ever require, the past, but to him who puts his trust in the atoning sacrifice of Calvary, he requires only to forgive.

VI

THE CONSUMING FIRE

"Our God is a consuming fire."

Heb. 12:29

This is given as the reason that we should seek for grace to serve God with reverence and awe. The verse is sometimes amended to read, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire." But amendments to the Word of God are not in order. It is our God, the God of the New Testament, who is a consuming fire. What God was, he is forever. The difference between the God of the old covenant and the new is not in character but in revelation. He is the same God, but we know him better. God out of Christ, God in Christ, is a consuming fire.

There were heretics in the early church who distinguished sharply between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. One is a cruel and malign despot, the other is a kind and merciful Father. A similar distinction, though it does not run to the same extreme, is often drawn to-day. We fancy that some change was wrought in the nature, the disposition of God by the life and death of Christ. God learned to love on Calvary. The sternness and hardness of his heart have been softened by the suffering and mediation of his Son. But no change has taken place in him. He has simply revealed himself more clearly, has made known to us more fully the grace which has always dwelt within his heart.

Broadly speaking the Old Testament portrays God's hatred of sin, the New Testament portrays God's love of the sinner. Yet both his love and his hate appear alike in the old covenant and the new. The Old Testament magnifies the law, displays the justice of God; yet the promise of a Saviour was given in the very hour of man's first sin. And the earlier Scripture abounds in gracious invitations and promises that anticipate the most tender and loving words of the Son of Man. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." "Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." It is the God of the Old Testament who speaks, the God of Sinai. Then too his nature and his name was love. God does not love men because Jesus died for them; Jesus died for men because God loved them. Because he loved the world, he gave his Son.

The New Testament magnifies the love, displays the grace of God; yet the God of the New Testament too is a consuming fire. The roll of Sinai's thunder is the deep undertone of the gospel. If there were no Sinai with its broken law there would be no need of Calvary with its atoning blood. Love and hate are twin passions in the breast of God. God is re-

vealed in Christ, and Christ is always walking the earth in mercy and in judgment. Because of the double nature of his mission he speaks in paradoxes, seems to contradict himself. He said, "I came not to judge the world"; and again, "For judgment came I into this world." The name he bears is Prince of peace, yet he warned his disciples, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." What an incongruous figure is this, the Prince of peace coming into the world with sword in hand! We must distinguish between the ultimate purpose and the immediate effect of his coming; the ultimate purpose is peace, the immediate effect is division, strife. He came to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; but the immediate effect of his coming was "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household," a prophecy which is fulfilled in every heathen land to-day. He came to bring Jew and Gentile together, breaking down the wall of partition between them, so making peace. But the immediate effect of his coming was to exasperate the Jew, to kindle afresh the fires of hatred in his breast, so that the Church must leave the fold of Judaism before it could bid welcome to the Gentiles. He came to make peace between man and God; but the immediate effect of his coming was to drive men to that extremity of sin which nailed the Son of God to

the cross. When he spoke to his disciples of the sword, he announced a principle of universal application. Peace is won only through conflict. It is the reward of victory. "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The crown is gained by the cross. There is no other way.

Fire plays a large part in the ministry of Jesus. So Malachi foretold. "But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire." So John the Baptist declared, "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." And Jesus himself said to his disciples, "I came to cast fire upon the earth," and declared that everyone shall be "salted with fire." Every man shall be put to the test of fire, which shall either purify or destroy. When John saw the risen and exalted Christ in the vision on Patmos, his eyes were as a flame of fire. And when he comes again in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, he shall be revealed "in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God." II Thess. 1:7.

The most terrible pictures of judgment are not painted by the lawgiver or the prophets of the Old Testament, by Moses or David or Isaiah; but by

Paul and John, and above all by the Lord Jesus. That is a tremendous phrase which John puts in the mouth of sinners as the terrors of divine judgment overwhelm them. They call to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," the wrath of outraged and rejected love, the anger of a wounded heart. The Saviour is the Judge. He who with outstretched arms and infinite compassion in the days of his flesh and now by his Spirit beseeches men to turn to him and live, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; he it is who shall say in the Day of Judgment to them upon his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

God has given us fair warning. He has thundered his law in our ears. He has stamped his hatred of sin upon a guilty race. He has written it in letters of blood on Calvary. He has provided a way of deliverance at infinite cost. If a man persist in sin after the threatenings of the law and the invitations of the gospel his blood shall be upon his own head. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." That, too, is a word from the New Testament, and from this same epistle.

This may seem a hard and cruel representation of the divine nature. But the important question for us to determine is whether it is true. Our great concern is to know God as he is, not as we might prefer

to have him. Lord Bacon tells us that "the human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections; whence proceed sciences which may be called 'sciences as one would.' For what a man had rather were true he more readily believes." These are sciences built not of facts but of fancies, and shaped at pleasure. There is religion, too, of this kind, religion fashioned by our desires, religion as one would. There are those who conceive of God as an easy-going old grandfather, who looks down with an indulgent eye upon the faults and failings of men; lets them do as they please, and will somehow make it all right in the end. This thought of God is in part the cause and in part the effect of the careless, self-indulgent lives that many lead. Where is this God of our dreams? The Scripture saith, He is not in me; and history saith, He is not in me; and providence saith, He is not in me; and experience saith, He is not in me. There is no place in all the wide universe where he may be found. There is no such God. He is a figment of the imagination, nothing more. The God of Scripture, history, providence, experience, is the God who is a consuming fire. The God with whom we have to do is the God in whose breast flames and burns a hatred of sin that shall never rest until sin has been destroyed.

But there is another aspect of the truth that may serve to relieve the seeming harshness of the representation, and even turn the clouds of wrath to glory. In this consuming hatred of sin that burns in the

breast of God lies our only hope of redemption, of the triumph of righteousness among men. If there were no hatred of sin in the heart of God there would be no salvation for the sinner. It is this alone which hinders sin from extending its sway over all the earth, and making of the universe a hell.

Look at the individual life. When a man purposes to forsake sin and turn to righteousness, he soon discovers that he has undertaken a task beyond his strength. He is bound by fetters of habit that he cannot break. Passions and appetites are clamorous. Old associations assert their power. Familiar sins keep tugging at his heartstrings. He feels his weakness. He must either abandon the struggle in despair or seek a strength beyond his own. He looks to God. But what reason has he to believe that God will help him? Why should God be interested in the struggles of this puny creature, like an insect caught in the mighty web of sin? Why should God trouble himself about the matter? Why should he not rather let the sinner fight it out alone? This is the ground on which he may hope that God will come to his help and this alone: "Our God is a consuming fire." If God were indifferent to sin, or careless, or neutral, the case would be beyond hope and beyond remedy. But when he cries, "O God, I hate my sin," God answers, "I hate it infinitely more." And when he cries, "O God, I long for righteousness," God answers, "I long for it infinitely more."

Wherever in all the wide world a man is battling with lust and appetite and temper and greed and

selfishness God is with him, and will strengthen him with all the resources of omnipotence. In this consuming passion for righteousness in the heart of God, flaming out against all manner of sin, he finds his only hope. God will turn upon him that burning flame until his sin shall be consumed, his soul purified, and he shall be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, in the home whither no sin may come. Every man who takes his place with the redeemed above shall praise God for the consuming fire that prepared him for that blest abode.

Apply the truth to social and national life. Every man who seeks to help his fellow men in any effective and enduring way is animated by a double motive; he loves them, he hates the sin that defiles and destroys them. The philanthropist, the reformer, the patriot cherishes a deep and burning hate side by side with a deep and burning love. No man has ever accomplished great things for God and for mankind unless there was in his heart a consuming fire kindled from the heart of God. If the disciple shall be as his Master he too must bear the sword and cast fire upon the earth. He must set himself inexorably against every form of sin, and wage against it a holy war that shall never end until fire and sword have wrought their work of destruction.

But when a man proclaims war against superstition, intemperance, licentiousness, war, any of the innumerable ills that afflict humanity, how can he hope for victory? These evils are deep rooted, inveterate. He must contend against vested interests,

established systems hoary with age and entrenched in the lust and appetite and greed and selfishness of men. Against such foes what may he hope to accomplish? This is his confidence and this alone—"Our God is a consuming fire." God hates sin not with a lukewarm, listless, languid dislike, but with all the burning energy of his infinitely holy nature. And he who with determined purpose arrays himself against any form of evil is assured that God hates it infinitely more than he does. He looks upon some giant system of evil which has long played the tyrant over men. He recognizes its enormous power, he knows that it will mock his puny strength. But he sees also that imposing and impregnable as it appears, the curse of God is upon it and it shall wither and shrivel in the fires of the divine anger. God is turning against it the flames of his wrath and it shall be consumed. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The fate that overtook Sodom and Gomorrah is a prophecy of the destruction that is reserved for every form of iniquity.

If a man love sin, this is to him a thought of terror—our God is a consuming fire. It is the Master who tells us that those who choose sin for their portion and will not heed the warnings and entreaties of the gospel shall have their place in the unquenchable fire of divine judgment. To him who hates sin and seeks the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, it is a thought of strength and joy. God is wtih me in the battle against sin in my own heart and in

the world without, and because he hates it with a deep and burning hatred that can never rest until it is consumed, victory is assured.

If we are the children of God we must learn to hate sin as he hates it, to love righteousness as he loves it, to throw ourselves into the battle of righteousness against sin with all the ardor of a heart in which Christ dwells by faith, with all the energy of a soul quickened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with something of the flaming wrath that burns unquenchably in the breast of the Almighty. Then we shall have part in the ministry of our Master, shall serve the eternal purpose of God, shall have a part in the conflict, the victory, the reward. When the flames have done their work from the mighty conflagration shall come forth new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Let us rejoice in God who is a Saviour because he is a consuming fire, and let us give ourselves to the service of the Kingdom, which is first righteousness, then peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness must be established before peace and joy can prevail. It is ours to-day to wage the war of righteousness that the blessings of the Kingdom may be won.

"He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment-seat:
O be swift, my soul, to answer him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on."

VII

THE RISEN CHRIST

"If Christ be not risen."

I Cor. 15:14

There were those in Corinth who denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Probably they believed in the immortality of the soul, but held that the body should perish, regarding it as a prison from which the spirit should be delivered by death, a fleshly vesture suited to the present life, but having no place in the life beyond. Paul declares that to deny the resurrection of the dead, the raising of the body from the grave, in altered form indeed but with identity preserved, is to deny the resurrection of Christ. "If the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised." He was a real man, having a true body and a reasonable soul. He submitted to the conditions of our mortal life, yielded to the power of death, was laid in the tomb, that in all things he might be made like unto his brethren. To deny the resurrection of men is to deny his resurrection, for he too was a man. And that in Paul's view is to sweep away the very foundation of Christian faith.

So vital is the truth of the resurrection of Christ that he proceeds to establish it by an elaborate argument. He does not reason from the universal to the particular, seeking to establish the doctrine by considerations of a general nature, and then applying it

to Christ. But he reasons from the particular case to the universal truth, setting forth the proof that Christ rose again, and then showing that the resurrection of mankind is bound up with his. That he rose again is the foundation of the doctrine of the resurrection. Why may we believe that men shall rise again? Because this man has actually risen, this man, the Son of Man, who gathers up in his own person the interests and destiny of mankind. How can it be said that there is no resurrection of the dead, when in fact Christ has risen?

As the doctrine rests upon the fact of Christ's resurrection, Paul marshals the evidence for the fact with convincing power. Three lines of argument are followed.

(1) He reminds them that the resurrection as well as the death of Christ was predicted in the Scripture. "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." This is the earliest creed of the Christian Church. The Corinthians accepted the Old Testament as the word of God. How then could they deny that resurrection which the Old Testament clearly foretold? Why should it be thought a thing incredible with them that God should raise the dead, when he had declared by the mouth of his prophets that the Christ should rise again? On the Day of Pentecost Peter appealed to the Sixteenth Psalm. David exclaimed, "Thou wilt not leave my

soul unto sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Evidently David did not speak of himself, for his body had long since moldered to dust; but he "spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption." His death and resurrection are the firm pillars on which our faith rests, and both the death and the resurrection were foretold. If we trust the prophecy, we must accept the fact. As God is true, if Jesus was the Christ, as we all believe, he must have risen from the dead; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The argument is absolutely conclusive for those who accept the Old Testament as the word of God, and Jesus as the Christ.

(2) He appeals to those who saw him after he rose from the dead, and summons an imposing array of witnesses. On the day of his resurrection he appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, most of whom were still living; then to James; to all the apostles; and last of all to Paul himself. These were honest men; they had known Christ during his earthly life. Some of them were his intimate friends. They were not looking for his resurrection, but had abandoned all hope of seeing him again; and could hardly believe the evidence of their senses when he appeared to them. They had abundant opportunity to satisfy themselves that it was really their Master whom they saw, and not a mere hallucination, the offspring of a heated fancy. At least ten times he

showed himself to some of them in visible form. He resumed his familiar intercourse with them. They walked and talked and ate and drank together. They had nothing to gain by declaring that they had seen him unless it was true. Their witness to the resurrection drew down upon them the hatred of the Jews and the mockery of the Greeks; but in face of persecution and of death they maintained that they had seen him. They were thoroughly persuaded that he had risen and appeared to them, and devoted their lives to preaching Jesus and the resurrection; and some of them sealed their testimony with their blood. If anything may be established by human witness, the resurrection of Christ is established beyond a doubt.

(3) The third line of truth is what the logicians call the *reductio ad absurdum*. It consists in assuming a proposition, and showing that the consequences which follow from it are absurd. Then it is plain that the proposition is itself absurd. If the conclusions are preposterous, the premises are false. This method is constantly employed in mathematics, in philosophy, in our common speech. If it is properly used, no mode of argument has more convincing and overwhelming power. If it can be shown that the inferences are properly drawn, there is no possible answer.

This is Paul's argument: You deny the resurrection of the dead, that involves the denial of the resurrection of Christ. Now see to what that leads. If Christ be not risen,

(*a*) Our preaching is vain. Ours is a historical religion. It rests upon two great facts, the death and resurrection of Christ. They form the burden of our message, the substance of our preaching. If either is denied the whole structure of gospel teaching falls. The Old Testament predicted that the Christ should die and rise again. If Jesus did not rise again, he is not the Christ. He himself declared again and again that he should be put to death and the third day should rise again. If he did not rise he is a false prophet, deceiver or deceived. Jesus and the resurrection form the theme of our preaching; but if he did not rise again we preach not facts but fancies, not truth but a lie. This message that has turned the world upside down and is drawing the hearts of men to the Kingdom of God with ever-growing power is an idle dream, a baseless fancy, a deliberate deceit. The word of the Scripture, which is the word of God, of Jesus himself, of his apostles, is false, all false, if he be not risen. Our preaching is vain, empty, has no substance, no reality, no fact that answers to the word. Instead of words of truth and soberness we speak great swelling words of vanity, words that promise much and yield nothing. The gospel as we have declared it unto you is a mistake, a delusion, a falsehood. This service to which we have consecrated our lives, putting them in daily peril, is nothing but a beating of the air.

If Christ be not risen,

(*b*) Your faith is vain. Your faith rests upon our preaching. You know Christ only through our wit-

ness. We have seen him, we know him, we have made him known to you. We have told you the story of his life, his death, his resurrection, and you received our message as the word of God. If our preaching is vain, a mere show of empty words, your faith that is built upon our preaching is also vain. It has no foundation, lays hold upon no reality. You have put your faith in an illusion. Your faith is built upon the sand, your hope has laid hold upon a lie. The gospel is simply the latest and most cruel of the illusions that have mocked the longings and broken the hearts of men. You have surrendered all to him, yielded yourselves to him without reserve, rejoicing in the hope of eternal life; and this faith of yours upon which you have ventured all proves to be only a baseless dream. You are grasping at shadows, trusting to words which are no more than empty breath.

If Christ be not risen,

(*c*) We are found false witnesses of God; "because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised." We have affirmed, we continually affirm, it is the burden of our message, that we saw him after he rose from the dead. We declare that we do not follow cunningly devised fables, nor do we appeal to the witness of others. We say that we saw him ourselves, with our own eyes we saw him. Call the witnesses, and let them speak for themselves. "Peter, did you see him?" "Yes, the day he rose from the dead he came to me though I had denied

him. And again at the Sea of Galilee he cut me to the heart with the question, 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?'" "James, John, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, did you see him?" "Yes, he came to us the very day he rose from the dead and said, 'Peace be unto you.' And we were afraid, thinking that it was a spirit. But he told us to look and handle him and see that it was he himself. Then he breathed upon us the gift of the Holy Spirit." "Thomas, did you see him?" "Yes. That first night I was not with them. I had lost faith and hope, and went off to muse and grieve alone. But they sought me out and found me, and told me that they had seen the Lord. But I smiled at their folly, and said that I would not be so easily deceived. Nothing would satisfy me but to see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side where the spear had opened the way. So I spoke in my blindness. And a week later he came. He offered me the proof that I had asked, but I saw him, and I asked no more. I fell at his feet with the adoring cry, 'My Lord and my God.'" "You who are still living of the five hundred brethren, did you see him?" "Yes, on a mountain, where we were gathered together we saw him. So incredible was the sight that some of us doubted at first, but soon we all believed and worshiped." "James, did you see him?" "Yes, while he lived I could not believe that he, my own brother, was the Christ. But when I saw him risen from the dead, I could doubt no longer." "Paul, did you see him?" "Yes, he appeared to me as I was

journeying to Damascus, to persecute his followers. The moment I saw him and heard his voice, I recognized the promised Messiah, and owned him my Lord."

These are the men who testify that they have seen the Lord. Most of them are still living. They go everywhere, bearing witness that he is risen again. They are ready to die for their faith. But if Christ be not risen, they are false witnesses every one. They bear witness to what they have seen with their own eyes. Either they are the victims of an illusion without parallel in the whole course of history, or they are liars who are ready to lay down their lives for a lie.

If Christ be not risen,

(*d*) Ye are yet in your sins. This is the gospel message, "By grace have ye been saved through faith." But your faith is vain, if Christ is not risen. You have laid hold upon one who had no power to serve. You have committed yourselves to the care of the dead. "The wages of sin is death." He came to deliver us from the power of death. But how shall he break off from us the fetters of death if he is still bound by those fetters himself? How can he save others who could not save himself? Your sins still rest upon your own head. You are like the prisoner who, in the darkness of his narrow cell, dreams of liberty. Bright is the sun, sweet the air of freedom, dear the faces of his fellow men. But soon he awakes to the stern reality that surrounds him. The walls of the prison shut him in, the irons

are upon his hands and feet. The darkness is deeper, the loneliness more bitter, because of this brief taste of liberty, though it were only in a vision of the night. You dream of freedom, of the liberty of the children of God; but you are in bondage still. You dream of salvation, but you are lost in sin. You dream of a Saviour, but the body which you fondly hoped had borne your sins upon the tree has moldered away in Joseph's tomb. You dream of heaven, but hell opens its gates to receive you, and there shall be your home. The burden of guilt that you fancied you had cast upon Christ is crushing you down to darkness and despair. There is no Saviour, no salvation, no life eternal. The cross is vain unless the grave is empty. A dead man has no power to save. After all your faith and hope and vain strivings after holiness, you are dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath and not of God.

If Christ be not risen,

(*e*) "They also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

About twenty-five years have passed, almost the lifetime of a generation, since Jesus was laid in his rocky tomb. How many believers have fallen asleep in him, calling upon him with expiring breath, rejoicing in the thought that they were about to depart and be with him, which is far better. Some of them shed their blood for him, gladly laying down their lives for the honor of his name. They trusted him with all their hearts and rested upon his promise that he would give unto them eternal life. In that

joyful hope they lived and died. I remember Stephen, the first martyr. I saw his face shine like the face of an angel. I heard him cry, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," and he called upon him, praying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; and calmly fell asleep.

It is five years since I first preached the gospel to you in Corinth. Many of those who heard me and believed are gone. They died in the full assurance of faith. They believed the word that Jesus spoke, "In my Father's house are many mansions; . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." You committed them to the earth, believing that you laid them in the arms of Jesus. You were comforted in their death by the hope that they had entered into life. But it is all a delusion, if Christ be not risen. They dreamed of heaven, they wake in hell. They have perished every one. They are lost, all lost, forever lost, for they are yet in their sins, and the wrath of God rests upon them through eternity. The gospel is a fable, salvation is a dream, sin and judgment alone are real. Those who fell asleep in Jesus have perished everlastingly. Father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend—they are all lost.

We commit our beloved dead to the earth in the glad hope of a glorious immortality. By the side of the open grave we have seen Jesus standing, and

have heard from his lips the blessed words on which we rest: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." "Thy brother shall rise again." Upon the stone that marks their last resting place we inscribe the words that have brought peace and comfort to our sorrowing hearts: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," "They shall see his face," "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There are many tiny graves in which are laid the bodies of little children. Over them is the inscription, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven." We have been greatly comforted by these gracious words. But how terribly are we deceived, if Christ be not risen. Then are they falsehoods, every one of them. There is no Redeemer, no heavenly home, no Kingdom of heaven for little children. Let us take mallet and chisel and go from grave to grave, striking out these flattering words letter by letter till not one lying syllable remains.

What shall we inscribe instead? "Death is an eternal sleep?" Terrible as those words may be they fall immeasurably short of the awful reality. As all who slumber there are involved in a common fate, as all are yet in their sins, there is no need of carving upon each separate tombstone the word of doom.

Let us place above the entrance to every cemetery the words that Dante saw inscribed above the gates of hell: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." "They also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished."

These are the consequences that follow the denial of the resurrection. "Our preaching is vain," "Your faith is vain," "Ye are yet in your sins." "We are found false witnesses of God," "They also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Truly are we then of all men most pitiable, we who have believed a lie and set our hope upon the dead. Life may be a pleasant dream, but death shall shatter our illusions, and set us face to face with the grim realities of judgment.

But hearken to this trumpet peal of exultation: "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep." "The Lord is risen," cry the mighty hosts of those on earth who have felt his saving power and rejoice in his constant presence. "The Lord is risen indeed," is the response like the sound of many waters, from the multitude that no man can number, who see his face and bow before his throne in the kingdom above. And every ransomed soul in heaven and on earth replies, "Amen and Amen." Our faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Our hope is fixed upon the living One who was dead, and behold he is alive for evermore. Our sins are blotted out for his name's sake. Our beloved dead are safe. No man shall pluck them out of his hand, the hand

that was nailed to the cross of Calvary for their redemption. He hath opened to all believers the gates of everlasting life. Here and hereafter, now and forever, he is our Saviour and friend. The utmost reach of our faith and hope falls immeasurably short of the truth and the grace that are found in him. He is all that we expect, and infinitely more, able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

In his rapturous flight Paul has borne us to the skies, beyond the realm of time and sense, to that heavenly home where death is swallowed up in victory. Now he brings us back to earth. We have not yet attained that perfect life. It is reserved for those who are faithful here. Only through fidelity to the tasks of to-day shall we find the way to everlasting life.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren," seeing we have such a Saviour, such a hope, such a responsibility, "be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord." The path of duty is the path of life.

VIII

THE FOLLY OF SIN

"When he came to himself."

Luke 15:17

The phrase does not indicate that he had been insane, though indeed he was affected with that moral insanity which the Scripture terms folly and sin. It means he came to his senses. We are accustomed to say, when we are out of sorts, I am not myself to-day. If one whom we esteem gives way to bad temper, or falls below our expectation, we say charitably, He is not himself. In these common forms of speech we recognize that a man is himself only when he is at his best. The true self is the better self. This man of the story had been in a manner beside himself. He was lost to reason and conscience. The sensual in him overcame the rational, the brute mastered the man. He gave himself up to lust and appetite. When reason and conscience began to reassert themselves, when the higher nature began to stir within him, it is said that he came to himself. A man is himself only as his life unfolds according to the divine purpose.

Hunger and rags and wretchedness brought him to his senses. Experience is a good teacher, because it wields a vigorous rod. Often it gives a clear head through a sore back, and flogs us to our senses. When in this case the brute was tamed by hunger, the man's better self had a chance to rise. He had

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learned much. His eyes were opened to see his folly. The cup of pleasure was sweet at first, but the dregs were exceeding bitter. Wild oats may be sown in joy, but they are reaped in tears. When wealth gives place to want, and poverty takes the place of plenty, when the wages of sin is rags and husks, it is time that a man should come to himself.

His was the folly of a wasted life. He left his home with his pockets full of money, with high hopes, great expectations. The world was all before him. He journeyed to a far country. How long he remained there we are not told. Perhaps it was not many months. He stayed until his money was all gone, but a fast young man soon runs through a fortune. Whether the time was long or short, what had he to show for it? What was the fruit of these weeks and months? Money gone, good name gone, virtuous habits gone. What had he gained? Rags to wear and husks to eat. He paid dear for such garments and such fare. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." He had devoted himself to the task of throwing away all that he had, of getting rid of every penny of his wealth, every shred of reputation, every vestige of good habits, and he had won eminent success. His was the folly of a wasted life. It is highly significant that the common word for sin, both in the Old Testament and in the New, means literally "missing the mark." The sinful life misses the mark at which it ought to aim, the end of its creation. And further it misses the mark at which it

does aim. This young man sought liberty, and we find him the menial of a stranger. He sought pleasure, and has come to feed with the swine. The Devil is a liar from the beginning, and his promises are never kept.

His was again the folly of enfeebled powers. Dissipation shatters the nerves, weakens the body, deadens the mind, damns the soul. To have thrown away his fortune, wasted months of life, was bad enough; but his folly had yet a lower depth. He spent his money and his time in accomplishing his own ruin, gave all that he had for his own destruction. Bad men and women gathered around him, and he not only let them lead him astray but paid them for doing it. If any young man here is setting out on that way, just beginning with irresolute step to walk in the counsel of the wicked, let him take the warning. If you go on, you will lose all you have, your money, your good name, your character, your soul. And what will be your reward? What return will you receive? What will you have to show for it? A bad name, a diseased body, a lost soul. "The wages of sin is death." You buy damnation too dear. This it is worth your while to remember—the profligate pays the Devil all he has for the privilege of going to hell.

Simply to throw away time and money were bad enough, but to spend them for our own destruction is the very madness of sin. No wonder this man is represented as beside himself.

And again his was the folly of a wretched state.

Sin had brought him to want and misery. The folly of his condition lies in this, that he brought it on himself. If it were the result of misfortune, if he had been overtaken by sickness, or disaster while he was trying to lead an honest life, he could bear it with a clear conscience and a brave heart. Many a man without food or clothing has enjoyed peace of soul, has cried with the prophet, "Though the fig-tree shall not flourish, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. 3:17, 18. But more dreadful than the hunger that gnawed his vitals was the guilt that tormented his soul. His condition was entirely gratuitous; these rags, this wretchedness, were uncalled for, unnecessary. He brought it all on himself without cause or reason. He is here only because he chose a course of life which could have no other end. He must have known other men who tried that way, must have seen whither it led them. He had seen them smart under the lash. But like thousands of men to-day, he believed that the way which led others to ruin would lead him to peace. He fancied, as thousands fancy to-day, that he could enjoy the pleasures and escape the penalties of sin. But it has been truly said, No man can steal the Devil's bait. If you try to steal the bait, you will feel the hook.

Behold then, the folly of the man—the folly of a

wasted life, of enfeebled powers, of a wretched state. Can folly sink to lower depths? Yes. Folly brought him to this place, but it will be more desperate folly to remain. Hunger brought him to his senses. The fumes of the wine cup no longer disorder his brain. The whisper of conscience is not drowned by the grunting of the swine as by the siren voices that lured him to his ruin. There are two voices that speak to him, the voice of memory and the voice of conscience. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare?" That is the voice of memory, recalling the peace and plenty of his father's house. "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." There spoke the voice of conscience. He says, "I played the fool in coming to this place. Is that a reason why I should continue to play the fool by staying here? Here I am starving, while the servants in my father's house have more than they can eat. I can put an end to this when I please. I have only to leave the swine and go home."

Here lay the folly of his condition, that he brought it on himself. Here, too, lay the hopefulness of it. He was not driven out from his home. His father did not say to him, "Take your portion and begone, and never darken my door again." In that case he would have had no hope of return. The door would have been closed against him, and nothing would be left him but to starve. But he went away of his own free will, of his own free will he may return. His

father was sorry to see him go, he will be glad to see him back. If he had been born a swineherd he would have accepted his lot as a matter of course, and made the best of it. But his misery lay deeper than physical needs. He was not in his right place. It was the contrast between the present and the past, it was the memory of the home that he had left, that gave the keenest edge to his distress. It is no disgrace to fill a lowly position. It is honest and honorable in the sight of God to be a swineherd, if that be the station which providence assigns.

> "Honor and shame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part; there all the honor lies."

No doubt the swine were better company than the men and women in whose society he threw away his money and his reputation. But it is disgraceful to hold a low place when we have forfeited a higher place by our own misconduct. It is disgraceful for a man of wealth and station to come to the post of swineherd by way of the wine cup and the harlot. A man of five talents has no right to hold a position that a man of one talent could fill as well. It is a shame to do a one-talent business on a five-talent capital. Every man is bound to fill the largest place, command the widest range of influence, render the largest service, that the powers which God has given him will allow.

This man should have held a position of honor and influence among his fellow men. He was born

to fortune. For him to be feeding swine, because he has thrown away his money and his opportunities, was a degradation and a disgrace. The wise course, the right course, is to return as speedily as possible to his proper place. He says: "I was not born to be a swineherd, I was not driven to it. My own folly brought me to this condition." That is the first gleam of reason that we discover in him. He came to his senses and saw that he was not in his right place. The story of his life while passion had the mastery of him is told in a single phrase—"He wasted his substance with riotous living." That is the record of months. That is all. Wealth, body, soul—what did he do with them? To what purpose did he devote them? What was the outcome of his life? This is all—he wasted his substance with riotous living. When he came to himself he said, "I will return to my father and my home."

The story is a parable of human life. We have all wandered. The difference between men is not that some have remained at home while others have journeyed to a far country. We have all gone astray. The difference is that some have returned and some have not. It is folly enough to have left God; it is greater folly to abide in sin. It is bad enough to go to the far country, it is worse to stay there and starve.

Sin is folly. That is the name commonly given to it in the book of Proverbs, which represents religion in its everyday dress, its working clothes, the religion not so much of the Church as of the market

place, the street, the home. Righteousness is wisdom, which begins with the fear of God; sin is folly.

Let us recognize in sin the folly of a wasted life. If you are not living for God, what are you living for? Is it something worthy of your capacity as a child of God? God has given you a nature kindred to his own, reason, imagination, will, has made you capable of holiness, clothed you with immortality. "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!" This magnificent equipment is yours. You have thoughts that wander through eternity, eyes that may see God, a heart that he has created to be his temple. What are you doing with this august nature of yours? Are you trying to crush the soul that was made to live forever, within the limits of a few score years? Are you making your immortal part a drudge, the slave of the belly and the back? We are half dust, half deity; are you burying the deity beneath the dust? Are you setting the foot of passion on the neck of reason and of conscience? Are you doing anything that will endure? Have you a purpose that spans the grave? Are you closing your eyes to inevitable death? Is your life turned to noble ends, or is it running to waste? These are questions that we must face before the judgment seat of the Almighty. He shall ask: "What have you done with the life that I gave you? I endowed it with godlike capabilities, set before it immeasur-

able opportunities, gave you all that becomes a child of the King of kings! What have you done with yourself? Have you filled the place, accomplished the end, for which you were created? Have you finished the work that I gave you to do?" There are some who will be forced to answer: "This soul of mine, godlike, immortal, I dragged in the mire of sensual indulgence, I made it a slave to appetite, I set it to serve the body. I crushed its aspirations, crippled its powers, clipped its wings, and for all that thou gavest me I have nothing to show but a wasted life."

Let us recognize in sin the folly of enfeebled powers. If you are not serving God, are you growing wiser, better, stronger, in the service of sin? It is unspeakably sad that a man should grow worse as he grows older. Are you as near to God as you were twenty years ago? When you were a child and knelt at your mother's knee to say your evening prayer you felt that God was very near; he was as real to you as your mother. How is it to-day? Has the world come between you and your Father, so that God seems very far away? You may have increased in knowledge and in wealth, but they are dearly bought if they have darkened your vision of God. Are the lessons of experience, the discipline of God's providence, the teachings of his Word, the stirrings of his Spirit all lost? To have the heart grow harder as you grow older, less sensitive to the divine appeal, to be farther from God in spirit the nearer you draw to his judgment seat, to continue

heaping sin upon sin while time is bearing you with tremendous swiftness toward your final reckoning—is that a picture of your condition?

Let us recognize in sin the folly of a wretched state. Are you satisfied? Do you feel that you are what you ought to be, what you could be? If you are satisfied, sin has benumbed your conscience, and the fatal disease is far advanced. But not many men are content with themselves when they stop to reflect. A great part of the misery of sin lies in the sense of degradation, the consciousness of powers undeveloped. We have dragged in the dust a nature made in the image of God. We have said to the soul, I set you to serve the body, to feed it, and clothe it and pamper it. That is your mission. You shall bend all your energies to making money that the body may be well clothed and nourished. You have no time to think of God or righteousness or the life to come, for if your thoughts are busied with these things you may lose a chance to make a dollar. We have tried to take an immortal soul and make it the slave of a perishing body. And the soul protests, resists, rebels. You are restless and dissatisfied. Ten thousand dollars has not brought you peace; you fancy twenty thousand will suffice. But the trouble is you cannot clothe the soul with purple and fine linen. You cannot feed the soul with sumptuous fare. The soul cries out for God. You are often discontented and want something you know not what. You want your Father, your home. Let your soul speak out. Listen to its voice, hear its cry.

Well said Augustine, who himself had tried the ways of sin and found them barren, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

There are men who repine over the chances lost to make a fortune. At such a time, they say, I might have won wealth by a single stroke. And they brood over the contrast between the poverty that presses them and the fortune that they missed. They curse the folly that threw away the golden opportunity. But what is a fortune lost to a life lost—a life sunk in sin when it might have been arrayed in righteousness and have borne the likeness of God?

Let us recognize in sin the threefold folly of a wasted life, enfeebled powers, a wretched state. It was our folly that brought us to this pass. There lies the guilt, there too lies the hopefulness of our condition. We are far from God not because he thrust us out and drove us away. We are here not by reason of divine decree, not through necessity or fate, we are here because we chose to come. If God had cast us off we should have no hope. If he had closed the doors of heaven against us, nothing would remain for us but to stay here and die. Jesus spoke of us as "lost." It is a sad word, but a hopeful word, too. Not cast off, not driven out, but lost. If we are lost, we have somewhere a father, a home. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost," he is come to lead us home to God. God did not leave us, we left him. Let us thank the Saviour for teaching us that word, "lost." The alienation

between God and man is of man, and not of God. The word "lost" may be music to our ears. You have wandered far, but the way is open to return. The doors have never been closed against you, the Father has never given you up. You left him, you may return to him. To this free will of ours, this divinest attribute of the soul of man, Satan appealed, to lead us into sin, to this free will God appeals to lead us home again. It was folly to forsake God, to leave our home, to believe the voice of the Tempter rather than the voice of our Father. It is deeper and deadlier folly to remain in sin when the homeward way lies open and the Father waits to welcome. You may have wasted years of life, will you waste the time that yet remains? Your soul may be enfeebled by sin, will you give it over to eternal death? You may be restless and dissatisfied to-day, how then will you abide the judgment of the great white throne? Because we have sinned, shall we persist in sin? Because we are hungry, shall we insist on starving? Because we have played the fool, shall we go on playing the fool until the curtain falls? We should exclaim at the folly of this man if he had stayed and starved. But what of our own folly? Here not the life of the body, but the life of the soul, eternal life, is at stake. If you continue in sin there is only one end, and that is death. But there is no need that any man should die. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he

will abundantly pardon." With that invitation sounding in our ears, if any one of us is lost it is because he will not be saved; if any one of us is condemned in the last day, it will be because he chose death rather than life. Shall we not come to ourselves, to our senses? Shall we not let the voice of reason and of conscience be heard? Yea, shall we not be silent for a time while God speaks to us, our Father, bidding us turn from our evil ways and live? O my friend, if there be in your soul any desire for righteousness, for heaven, for immortality, for God, lay hold upon eternal life as it is proffered to you in Jesus Christ.

A lover who was compelled to leave his beloved exposed to the temptations of a royal court gave her a talisman, a moth suspended between a flame and a star. It reflected visibly the workings of her heart, laid bare to her eyes every change of feeling. When she was inclined to yield to temptation, the moth sank toward the flame; when she resisted, it rose toward the star. It is a figure of our life. Yield to sin and the soul sinks toward destruction; resist, conquer, and it rises to the stars.

IX

TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Micah 6:8

When the prophet rebuked the people for their sins, and threatened them with divine judgment, they inquired, "What shall we do that we may avert the anger and win the favor of God?" What does God require of us? This is the answer, Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with thy God. Nowhere in Scripture is there a nobler conception of religion given. Justice, kindness, a humble walk with God; he in whom these are found shall be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing.

Over against this representation of the prophet we may set various types of religion which appear in every age, and hold a large place in the Church to-day. We may often define most effectively by contrast, and the grandeur of the prophet's thought is seen when it is set against the notions of religion which men have framed for themselves. Four types claim our attention.

(1) The ceremonial type. It is aptly illustrated by the question of the people here: "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thou-

sands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Religion is something given, something done, an act, a form, a ceremony, an offering, a sacrifice. When these are rendered, the claims of God are satisfied, and he requires no more.

Religion has two parts, soul and body. As soon as the spirit begins to express itself in act, it clothes itself with forms and ceremonies. They are as necessary to religion as clothing to the body. Ritual is the garb of religion. But in its essential nature religion is spiritual, a matter of the inner life, of motive, disposition, character. The history of every religion attests how surely and easily the form encroaches upon the spirit and usurps the foremost place. Men seek refuge from moral obligations in ritual observances. That is religion made easy, for no mode of service, no measure of gift or offering or sacrifice lays upon us a burden to compare with the requirement of a holy heart. The people of Israel were willing to take upon themselves any burden of an outward sort if they might escape the law of righteousness. All other surrender and sacrifice is easy in comparison with the surrender of the heart and the sacrifice of the will. They substituted ritual for righteousness. Throughout their history two forces were at work, represented by the prophet and the priest. The priesthood was an office of divine appointment, and was charged with duties of high importance. But because the priests were largely concerned with the external aspect of relig-

ion, charged with outward observances, they became men of the letter rather than of the spirit. Their religion grew hard, narrow, formal. They tithed mint and anise and cummin, and left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith. Religion consisted in pursuing a prescribed routine, and if this did not bring peace to the heart new regulations were framed, new burdens laid, new restrictions imposed, until men were hemmed in and straitened on every side, and bowed down beneath a grievous weight of ordinances which had no warrant in the law of God.

Over against the priesthood God raised up the prophets. The priesthood was a hereditary office. The prophet was called directly and immediately by God. It was his mission to keep before the minds of the people the true nature and purpose of the law. Samuel grasped the heart of the prophet's message when he said to Saul: "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The question at issue that day was whether Saul or God was king in Israel. Saul was willing to do anything except what God commanded him. He would not obey but he would sacrifice. God said, "Give me thy heart," and he answered, "Nay, but I will give thee sheep and oxen, even the best of them." The answer of Samuel throws into clear relief these contrasted conceptions of religion, held by the prophet and the priest. And the thought of the prophet reaches its

highest expression, attains its final form, in these words of Micah. The whole history of Israel is shaped by the conflict between these opposing conceptions of religion.

Jesus and the Jews renewed the battle of the prophet and the priest. Ritual is religion, said the Jews; righteousness is religion, said Jesus. For a time ritualism prevailed, and righteousness was nailed to the cross of Calvary. The strife is raging to-day in every church, in every soul. The prophet is trying to lift us to the height of holiness; the priest bids us be content with the forms of worship and of service. There is a prophet and a priest in every heart. On one side is the voice of God, calling us to self-surrender, a godly life; on the other side love of ease and indolence and self-will bid us spare ourselves the cross, and substitute for it a round of formal observances.

The most persistent and pestilent heresy in the Church to-day, as in every age, is the denial of the absolute sovereignty of God over the lives of men. It invades our literature, creeps into our teaching, is even proclaimed from the pulpit. Sometime ago in a paper prepared for use in Sunday schools I came upon these amazing words, "How good God is; he gives us six days in the week for ourselves, and asks that we give him only one day of the seven." It is the voice of the priest that speaks. Give God one day of the week, and the rest is yours. God is good, but not in that way. He does not give us six days in the week for ourselves, not one day, not one hour.

Every moment of our lives belongs to him, and is to be used according to his will and for his glory. We are to serve him on Monday as truly as on Sunday, though in a different way. We serve him as truly in the work of the week as in the worship of the Sabbath. We cannot give him one day unless we give him every day. How can we serve the world for six days, and serve him in truth on the seventh? The week is a chain of seven links; can we leave six of them on the ground, and lift the other to the skies?

Or we may fancy that if one tenth of our income is devoted to religious and charitable purposes the remainder is ours to use as we will. Let us observe that when a division of any kind is made between God and self, self always gets the lion's share. Never is it proposed that God shall have six days in seven, or nine dollars in ten. We do not give God anything as we ought until we give him everything. The gift of self must precede all other gifts, if they shall be acceptable to him. "The gift without the giver is bare." Let the prophet speak to us, "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price." Jesus died not to redeem one day in seven or one dollar in ten. He died to redeem us altogether, body, soul, and spirit, every moment, every dollar, every thought of the heart, every interest, motive, purpose, activity of the life.

(2) The æsthetic type. It is respectable, genteel, fashionable, in many communities to go to church. There are persons who with a little persuasion on

the part of the minister and proper attention from the members of the congregation may be induced to patronize the services of the sanctuary, to look with condescending interest upon the affairs of the Kingdom, and even to touch the music or the flowers with the tips of dainty fingers. The Church, like an army, has its camp followers, who hang on to its skirts, prepared with equal readiness to enjoy its privileges and evade its duties.

Years ago a family connected with the church to which I was ministering removed to New York City. Sometime later I met two of them and asked them if they had found a church home. They informed me that they had been visiting various churches, but had not yet made a choice. But there was one church to which they were strongly drawn. And the reason for their preference was interesting. They said nothing of the minister. It may be presumed that there was one, but he was apparently regarded as an adjunct of minor importance. Nothing was said of the music, the devotional spirit, the social atmosphere. But they were moved to enthusiasm as they said, "You ought to see the long line of carriages before the door." Carlyle poured the vials of his wrath upon those who thought that keeping a gig in England was a mark of respectability; what would he have said if he had known that churches are measured by the equipages that adorn the streets; that religion is a social function, nothing more, and is measured by the standards of society alone.

This mindless, heartless, soulless type of religion we may gladly dismiss with this brief mention.

(3) The intellectual type. The seat of religion is the brain. Religion is right thinking. Of course we do not disparage sound doctrine, for man is a rational creature and thought and life are intimately related. But there is a faith that bears no fruit in the life, and it is dead. Orthodox belief, if it stands alone, is not a virtue but a grievous fault, does not save but lays upon men a heavier condemnation. "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17. Truth is in order to goodness, Jesus said to his disciples, after he had given them an example of the ministry of love by washing their feet. "If ye know these things, blessed are ye"—and there are those who end the sentence there. Blessed are ye, if ye know. But Jesus went on, "Blessed are ye, if ye do them." It is not mere knowledge of the truth that brings a blessing. If that were true, the spirits that dwell in hell would be richly blest. "The demons also believe," but their faith yields only fear, "and shudder." James 2:19. The most heinous sin for which a man is called to give account at the bar of judgment may be his orthodoxy. For what sin can be more heinous than to know the truth, and refuse to obey?

Religion is more than theology, more than right thinking Right thinking is essential, but it must issue in right living. To see the right and deliberately choose the wrong is the last extremity of sin,

and the clearer the light the more heinous the sin must be. There are men who put their faith in their creed, but the better their creed the heavier shall be their judgment, if knowing the truth, they willfully go astray. It was against the orthodox party of his day that Jesus pronounced the most terrible judgments that ever fell from his lips. To the Pharisees he said, "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth." John 9:41.

The teaching of Scripture upon this point is abundantly clear. Neither faith nor knowledge has value in the sight of God unless the fruits of it appear in the life. "Faith apart from works is dead." James 2:26. "Knowledge puffeth up." I Cor. 8:1. To know and not to do is of all sins the most grievous, for it is the sin against light. Yet we constantly measure men by intellectual rather than by moral or spiritual standards, and judge them by their opinions rather than their character and conduct. Orthodoxy covers a multitude of sins in our sight, though it may be itself the worst of sins.

History unhappily furnishes many illustrations. About a hundred and fifty years ago a tract was published in England called "The Old Fox Tarred and Feathered." Who was the old fox thus ignominiously treated? John Wesley. Surely not John Wesley, the founder of Methodism? Yes, he was the fox. And who applied the tar and feathers? Toplady. Not the author of "Rock of Ages?" Yes, he was the man. He called John Wesley the most

rancorous hater of the gospel system that had ever appeared in England. He doubted if an Arminian could be saved, yet held it a duty to pray for him if, perchance, he might be led to see the error of his ways, and repent and be forgiven. And Wesley retorted with equal warmth and equal courtesy, "These men defend their positions with arguments worthy of Bedlam and language worthy of Billingsgate." Yet these were two of the godliest men in England. Upon what did they differ? What was it that stirred such bitterness in these saintly hearts? They could not agree upon the doctrine of predestination and free will, and because they disagreed upon a subject which neither of them understood they reviled each other in terms that would have disgraced a street brawl. Who doubts that Wesley and Toplady, Arminian and Calvinist, long ago joined hands in the heavenly home; and if the redeemed may use such language, they must often say, as they commune together of those days on earth, "What fools we used to be down there."

Newman Hall wrote a tract called "Come to Jesus," which has been blessed in leading many thousand souls to the Saviour. Later in life he became engaged in a theological controversy which grew more bitter, as such quarrels are apt to do, with each new stage of the discussion. At length he prepared a paper which he meant should be a crushing and final reply. He would close the argument by an attack that should be irresistible and overwhelming. He showed his opponent no mercy, and felt that he

had beaten him to the ground. When the paper was finished, he read it to a friend, and asked triumphantly, "How do you think I have handled him?" "Well," said his friend, "you have effectually disposed of him. Have you thought of a title for your paper?" "No," was the answer. "Have you anything to suggest?" "I propose," said his friend, "that you call it, 'Go to the Devil,' by the author of 'Come to Jesus'." The paper was never published.

(4) The emotional type. The seat of religion is the sensibilities. It is purely a matter of feeling. If you feel good you have religion; and if you have religion you may live as you please. There are those who tell their pastor, "I have had so much trouble of late that I cannot go to church." Religion is a fair-weather friend. It used to be said in the town in which I began my ministry that there were persons who were converted every winter and went backsliding every summer. Religion must be created and sustained by excitement, built up by stimulants. It is not a matter of regular and constant growth but of spasmodic bursts of enthusiasm, with long intervals of rest. It is a state of chills and fever, with the chills predominating. The life is governed by moods and passions and impulses instead of reason and conscience.

Love is commended to us in the Scripture as the highest of motives, as the heart and soul of religion. But love is not mere unbridled emotion. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all

thy strength." There is far more than feeling here. Every part of our nature is enlisted—feeling and reason and conscience and will. Love is the turning of the whole man toward God. The soul is not divided. We cannot love God with the heart, and remain indifferent to him in the intellect and the will.

These types of religion are all fatally defective because they are incomplete. True religion embraces all of them and more. It has a place for rite and ceremony, as it expresses its thoughts and emotions in the forms of orderly devotion. It has a place for the love of beauty, and calls upon us to put on the garments of praise, and worship God in the beauty of holiness. It addresses the intellect, proclaims the truth, and bids men hear, accept, obey. It appeals to the strongest emotions that may stir the soul. But not one of these types, not all of them together, may furnish an adequate conception of the religion that God ordains. Let us turn from the notions of men to the wisdom of God, and hear the prophet as he declares to us what God requires.

There are three points in Micah's definition:

(1) "Do justly." Justice is rendering to every man his due. It requires of us the same consideration of the rights and interests of others as of our own. It lies at the foundation of social and individual righteousness. The prime duty we owe to our fellow men is not kindness but justice. We must pay our neighbor what we owe him before we undertake to give him of our bounty. It must be said that our social and industrial systems have often pre-

sented the spectacle of injustice tempered by charity. "Deal justly" is a refrain that the prophets never weary of repeating. Over against greed and selfishness and cruelty and oppression stands justice with drawn sword, defending the weak against the strong, guarding the rights of those who have no power of their own to maintain them, seeking to establish the law of righteousness in all the relations of men.

There can be no lasting peace between classes and nations until justice is established. And there should be none. For the Kingdom of God is first righteousness, righteousness which is perfect justice, then peace.

But justice is not the whole of religion.

(2) Kindness, or mercy. And we are commanded not simply to show mercy, but to love it. It must be in us as an abiding disposition, a settled inclination, a habit of life. "Be ye merciful, as your Father is merciful." The parable of the Unmerciful Servant teaches us that "judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy." James 2:13. Mercy too is a debt. We are not at liberty to be kind or not as we will. We must be just, we must be merciful. We must be prepared to render to men more than is due them according to the strict rules of judgment, must deal with them as God deals with us, adding mercy to justice.

> "In the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy."

To show mercy is to give beyond what justice requires, and obey the impulse of love. And in justice and mercy alike we are imitators of God as dear children.

Justice and mercy are the duties we owe to our fellow men. But beneath them lies the supreme duty that we owe to God. Only as we are in right relation to him shall we be able to discharge the debt that we owe one another.

(3) "Walk humbly with thy God." "Walk" is a familiar term in Scripture to denote the daily course and conduct of the life. To walk with God is not simply to obey him. Obedience may be rendered to an absent ruler, one whom we have never seen, with whom we have no sort of personal relation. To walk with God is to be in fellowship with him. So Enoch of old walked with God. He waits to be the friend of every day. He will go with us to our daily tasks. He will help us in every duty, will bless to us every experience of sorrow and of joy.

But we must walk humbly with him, remembering that he is great and we are small; he is holy and we are sinful. We are altogether unworthy to come into his presence, and that he receives us to fellowship with him is all of grace. We have great need of reverence in our religion, and there is often a great lack of it. We make light of sacred things, speak of God in terms of easy familiarity. Sometime ago, to my sorrow, I heard an evangelist who had much to say of hell, which seemed to be a place conveniently prepared for all who did not agree with him; and it

appeared to be well filled. Every now and then he shouted "hell" at the top of his voice, and everybody laughed. A word which should never be named without awe, without tears, which represents the fate from which the Son of God shed his blood to deliver men, is made the theme of jest and laughter, and that which broke the heart of Jesus is turned to a joke. Reverence lies at the heart of religion. Where it is wanting it is plain that we know neither God nor ourselves as we ought.

Have we outgrown this conception of the prophet? Justice and mercy toward our fellow men, and a humble, holy walk with God, is not this what God requires to-day? He can ask no more, he will accept no less. This is still the way of duty and life, a way made plain to us, thrown open to us, through the life and death of his Son our Saviour. There is no other way by which we may enter into life eternal.

X

THE PROMISES

"Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises."

II Peter 1:4

The promises are not mere ornaments of the Word, but its very strength and substance. We are wholly dependent upon God, and we are altogether unworthy of his favor. Our only hope is in his sure word of promise.

There are two great facts that impress upon us the sense of our dependence. The first is the fact of sin. We have broken God's law, we daily break it in thought, word, and deed; and we cannot make atonement for our sin, or cleanse ourselves from its pollution. Our hope of pardon and peace is found in God alone, and that hope is conveyed to us by his gracious promises.

There is again our ignorance of the future. No wit or ingenuity of man has availed to penetrate the darkness that veils the future from our sight. We may pierce the depths of space, weigh the sun, and measure the stars; but the marvelous achievements and inventions that have marked the progress of the race have not availed to throw one ray of light upon the time to come. It is still as true to-day as it was in the beginning, that we know not what a day may bring forth. Walking amid the splendors of modern civilization, we are as pitifully ignorant of the future

as the first of men. God bestows upon us the good gifts of his providence without measure, but he doles out time to us with a miser's hand, not day by day, or hour by hour, but moment by moment. The passing moment is all that we may call our own. We know nothing of the future except what he has been pleased to reveal; there is nothing to throw light upon the future but a promise.

A complete study of the promises would embrace all Scripture, for it is woven of promises throughout its whole extent. The Old and New Testaments, what are they but covenants; and what is a covenant but a promise upon condition? The Bible is a book of great events interpreted by great promises, of great promises fulfilled by great events. We can consider only some of the salient characteristics of the promises of Scripture, that we may see how true is the word of Peter that they are precious and exceeding great.

(1) Consider the number of the promises. The Bible is preëminently the book of promise. No other book recognizes so clearly the weakness and the sin of man, no other book reveals such a great and gracious God. When gracious God speaks to guilty man, his word must be a word of promise.

The Scripture begins with promise. The first word spoken to man, the creature, was the promise of dominion; the first word spoken to man, the sinner, was the promise of redemption. And the Scripture closes with the promise, "Yea: I come quickly"; to which the heart of the believer re-

sponds, "Amen: come, Lord Jesus." The Bible opens with the promise of the first coming of Christ, and ends with the promise of his second coming; and all the way between is strewn with promises, as the sky is studded with stars. They illumine every page, and shed the light of heaven upon every step of our journey from the cradle to the grave.

(2) Consider the variety of the promises. They are suited to every occasion, every experience, every need. Under whatever conditions a man may be placed, there is always a promise to bring courage and cheer to his heart, a promise that speaks to him by name. The promises, too, are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation; and they come to men arrayed in the power and grace of God.

There are great historic promises which determine the course of nations, and shape the destiny of mankind. There are two of these promises in the Old Testament. The first is the promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. The very form of the promise is significant. It was not addressed directly to man, but is contained in the curse pronounced upon the serpent, even as Christ in whom all the promises are fulfilled was made a curse for us. This promise is in three parts: (*a*) There shall be enmity between the woman and the serpent, and between his seed and her seed. Friendship with Satan was man's undoing, only through enmity and strife with Satan shall man escape the bondage and the guilt of sin. (*b*) In this

conflict man shall prevail. "He shall bruise thy head," the vital part. (*c*) But though man triumphs, he shall suffer sorely. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." The whole course of human history is the fulfillment of this primal curse, this primal promise; is the record of the sorrows and sufferings through which man must tread Satan under his feet. The promise is fulfilled in Christ, who through Gethsemane and Calvary destroyed the works of the Devil and won the name that is above every name; and leads the victorious host of his followers in triumph to the eternal city. All history is the record of the conflict, the struggle, the victory of mankind through Christ.

The other great promise of the Old Testament which sweeps the whole course of history is the word spoken to Abraham: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The earlier promise is taken up, confirmed, defined. How the first promise shall be fulfilled is declared by the second—it shall be through the seed of Abraham. The names given him in Scripture attest the place he holds in the history of redemption. He is the friend of God and the father of believers alike under the old covenant and the new. "They that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham." Gal. 3:7. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." Gal. 3:29.

All history is the unfolding of this promise, given to man in the hour of his sin, renewed when the covenant of grace was made with Abraham and his seed. Eleven chapters of Genesis are given to the

story of mankind before Abraham, all the remainder of Scripture is the story of him and of his seed, his seed after the flesh and after the spirit. On these two promises hang all the law and the prophets.

There are also two of these great historic promises in the New Testament. The first is the promise of the Lord Jesus that he will come again in glory to judge the world and take his ransomed people to himself. The first and second comings of Christ are the fixed points that determine the course of history. Then there is the promise that spans the whole period between his coming in flesh and his coming in glory. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Observe the sweep of these words. There is first the claim of authority, which lays the foundation for the promise. Then the duty is enjoined, "make disciples of all the nations." Then the promise is given, "I am with you always." On these two promises hangs all the New Testament.

All Scripture, all history is the unfolding of these great promises under the old covenant and the new. Nothing has happened or can happen which is not embraced within their ample scope. They clothe in words the eternal purpose and decree of God, who

sees the end from the beginning, and orders all things according to the counsel of his will.

There are again great comprehensive promises that cover the whole life of the believer, and are suited to every occasion and experience. They are the promises of him from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift, who is able to make all grace abound unto us. What is that word "grace" indeed but a promise as broad as life, as deep as the heart of God, "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think," to guard us from stumbling and set us before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy, the only God our Saviour? How rich is this word of the psalmist: "Jehovah will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Ps. 84:11. And this: "They that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing." Ps. 34:10. Take this word of Paul to the Philippians, and through them to all of like faith: "My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:19. "His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"—that is the inexhaustible treasure from which all our wants shall be supplied. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us of the promise, "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." Heb. 13:5. It is the word spoken to Moses, to Joshua. Now it is spoken to all believers. It is the essence of a thousand Old Testament promises gathered into one.

What great and precious promises are attached to

prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. 7:7. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do." John 14:13, 14. "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." John 16:23. The prayer is always answered, though the petition may be denied. He will give us what we ask; or something better. He does exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, never below it. Augustine's mother prayed that he might not set sail for Rome, yet this journey from which she strove to dissuade him proved to be the way to the Kingdom of God: so that he says, "Thou, mysteriously counseling and hearing the real purpose of her desire, granted not what she then asked, in order to make me what she was ever asking." The petition was denied, for it was asked in ignorance; the prayer was answered, for it was offered in faith and love.

Consider again the promise of the Holy Spirit, the fountain of all blessing. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:13. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another

Comforter, that he may be with you for ever." John 14:16. He is the spirit of truth, the spirit of life, the spirit of love, the spirit of grace, the spirit of promise, in whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

The promises stretch beyond this life, and lay hold upon eternity. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." I Tim. 4:8. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2, 3. "This is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal." I John 2:25. "To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God." Rev. 2:7.

Beyond these large and comprehensive promises there are specific promises for special needs. The general assurances are broken up into particulars that we may cherish no doubt of their extent and significance. The promise of all things may seem vague and indefinite. Is it to be taken literally? A host of promises is given so clear, so particular, so definite, so precise, that no room remains for doubt. "All things are yours," is to be taken in the most literal and absolute sense; for "ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

There are few men who are lifted above the pressure of worldly cares, who are not compelled to

ask each day, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink and wherewithal shall we be clothed? The vast majority of mankind always feel the burden of anxiety and want. The body clamors to be clothed and fed. This is the promise: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6:33. Are we tempted? This is the rock on which we stand: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." I Cor. 10:13. The way of escape comes with the temptation. We escape by meeting and overcoming in the strength of God. Are we tired, not in body, but in spirit? Jesus cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. He had in mind not bodily fatigue; a few hours of rest will restore the physical strength: but the weariness of the spirit. There are times when we feel that we have reached the limit of our strength even in the service of God. We are sick at heart. We cry, "I can go no farther. I can do no more, I can endure no longer." The soul is weary even unto death. Then this gracious voice brings peace to the heart, rest to the weary spirit. The soul is restored, refreshed, renewed in him, and with new strength and courage we take up again the burden that we thought we could not bear.

Has death knocked at our door, and stolen from us the light of our eyes and the joy of our hearts? Beside the open grave stands Jesus, with these words

of promise on his lips: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." John 11:25, 26. Blessed be he who in presence of death gives assurance of eternal life in him. Do our sins trouble us, disturb our peace, fill us with guilty fears? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9. For every event or experience of life there is a promise definite and clear, spoken to us as directly and personally as if it bore our name. Nothing can befall the child of God for which there is not a promise prepared and ready. Over against every need is set a promise.

But the promises are not reserved for believers; there are promises for the sinner too, else who should be saved? Even under the law God is revealed as plenteous in mercy, pleading with the sinner, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isa. 1:18. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55:7. The gospel is the promise of pardon and eternal life to all those who receive the Son of God as their Saviour. "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." John 10:9. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37.

This is the word of him who came not to call the "righteous but sinners to repentance"; who is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him.

No man can wander so far from God that a promise cannot find him. On every forbidden path in which he strays a promise meets him, and seeks to arrest his steps. There are no depths of sin and shame so profound that the promises cannot follow him there; and the gracious assurances of pardon and peace with God invite him to return. No matter how abandoned his life, how stained his record, how black his guilt, how hardened his heart, he cannot get beyond reach of the promises; and the promises are the keys of the Kingdom.

(3) Consider the certainty of the promises.

The word "whereby," with which the text begins, points us to the preceding phrase: "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted us his precious and exceeding great promises." His own glory and virtue is a comprehensive term for the divine nature. God cannot lie, he cannot deny himself. He called us by the whole energy of his infinite nature; and by that same infinite and eternal energy the promises are given. Every promise rests upon the same sure foundation as the redemption of his people.

As if the word of God might not be deemed sufficient, he confirmed it by an oath. The covenant

with Abraham which is the foundation of all the promises was thus attested, "For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. . . . Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie"—his word and his oath—"we may have a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Heb. 6:13-18. The promise that his seed should be multiplied embraces not merely his natural posterity, but yet more the heirs of his faith. They shall be as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore, and in them shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

The promises rest upon the word and the oath of God. And they are sealed by the blood of Christ. "How many soever be the promises of God, in him" —Christ—"is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." II Cor. 1:20. The assurance of the promises is given in Christ, in whom every promise is taken up, confirmed, enriched, fulfilled. And through him, his Spirit working in us, is the Amen, the response of the believer, accepting the promises and resting upon them as the sure foundation of faith and hope.

Thus the promises are given by God, confirmed by his oath, sealed with the blood of his Son. And they

are attested by the experience of his people. Joshua declared in the hearing of all Israel, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which Jehovah your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing hath failed thereof." Josh. 23:14. And at the dedication of the Temple Solomon cried with a loud voice before all the assembly of Israel, "Blessed be Jehovah, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised; there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by Moses his servant." I Kings 8:56.

And this testimony is taken up and repeated by a multitude that no man can number in heaven and on earth. It is the witness of all who have put their faith in the promises. They testify that they have tried them, proved them, found them true. They are as strong, as stable, as enduring, as the throne of God. We may commit ourselves to them without a fear. No man ever lived who can say, "I trusted the promise, and found it false, deceitful, unworthy of my trust." For every promise has beneath it the glory and virtue of the Almighty. No man has ever found a promise fall below his expectation. The fulfillment may outrun the promise, it will never come short of it.

Upon these four great pillars then we may confidently rest our faith in the promises of Scripture—the word of God, the oath of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the witness of his people.

(4) Consider the purpose of the promises: "That through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature." That we may become like God is the end for which we were created; and it is accomplished through the promises. Our relation to God is determined by them. We are drawn to Christ by his promises and by them we are inspired, sustained, cheered, strengthened on our heavenward way. Paul tells us that we are saved in hope, and hope feeds upon the promises. Upon them faith and hope alike repose. It is through the promises that God ministers unfailing strength and courage to our hearts. If they should be withdrawn, the foundations of our life would be destroyed. We believe, we hope, we pray, we strive, we suffer, we live in the strength of the promises; and through them we may climb to the heights where God sits enthroned. In that glad day when they shall all be fulfilled we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. By this golden ladder of the promises shall we ascend the skies. In the promises God has come down to us, through the promises we shall rise to him. It is the promises that open to us the gates of the Celestial City, that we may look upon the face of God and be changed into the same image.

So many, so varied, so sure, so mighty are the promises of God. What shall we do with them?

(1) Let us remember the purpose for which they are given, to make us partakers of the divine nature, to renew us in the image of God. Unless they accomplish this for us they are vain. Let us lay hold

upon them with faith, and through them God will work mightily in us, regenerating, sanctifying, making us like himself. "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." II Cor. 7:1. The promises invite us to be holy, even as he is holy, and if we appropriate them to ourselves they will make us holy, through the grace of the Spirit by whom they were given.

(2) Let us acquaint ourselves with the promises, so that in every time of need they come instinctively to mind. Let us know the Word of God and use it as Jesus did. Then when doubt, or trouble, or temptation comes, the promise shall be our shield and buckler, and our sword. We need no further aid in the day of battle than the promises of God. To have them at command is to be prepared for whatever life may have in store for us; to be equipped for every conflict, prepared for every duty and opportunity that the future may disclose. Nothing can take us by surprise or catch us off our guard if the promises are ours, for in them God has made provision for whatever may befall. He knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him, and in his gracious promises he has provided in advance for every need. "It shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer," said God by the mouth of Isaiah; and the word is fulfilled in his promises that anticipate every circumstance and condition of life. To have them at command is to be armed with the resources of om-

nipotence. And all the promises are ours if we are Christ's.

(3) Let us plead the promises in prayer. Moses prayed when Jehovah had threatened to cut off his people, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self"; and "Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people." The prayer that rests upon a promise cannot fail. When Israel was in captivity, Nehemiah prayed, "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses"; and God hearkened and restored his people to their own land. Jeremiah was very bold and cried, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us." Jer. 14:21. That was bold language even for a prophet, the language of a man who was sure of his ground because he had taken his stand upon the covenant, the promises of God. A man may say anything to God when he can rest his words upon a promise. We are on praying ground when we plead the promises. They are the heart and soul of believing prayer. God cannot deny us when we rest our petitions upon his own word. Then we know we pray according to his will. We have the right to come to him and say, "O God, I claim the promise." With such boldness God is well-pleased; for it is the boldness of faith. "This is the boldness that we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his

will, he heareth us," and his will is revealed to us in his promises.

One of the most striking pictures in "Pilgrim's Progress" represents Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle, the prisoners of Giant Despair. With his grievous crabtree cudgel he had beaten them fearfully, so that they were not able to help themselves, or to turn themselves upon the floor. There they lay, half dead, without light or food or drink, from Wednesday morning till Saturday night. About midnight on Saturday they began to pray, and continued in prayer till almost break of day. Then suddenly Christian broke out in passionate speech. "What a fool am I, thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty. I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." And he tried the key, and found that it opened the lock of every door and gate that barred their way, and soon they walked at liberty.

No man is a stranger to the prison, the prison of doubt, of sorrow, of fear, of sin. We all have need at times to say with Paul, "Remember my bonds." But there is no prison so strong, no wall so high, no gate so barred, that it can long confine him who bears in his bosom this key called promise. It will open the door of every house of bondage and set the captive free. Or we may change the figure and say that the promise comes to us as the angel came to Peter while he slept between two soldiers in the cell of a Roman prison. His chains fell off, the gate flew

open, and he was delivered from the hand of Herod. To every man who is bound and imprisoned the promise comes to lead him out of his captivity into that freedom wherewith Christ sets his people free. The promises are the foundation of our faith, the strength of our hope, the inspiration of our prayers, the joy of our hearts, the ministers of our needs, the keys of every prison, and the keys of the Kingdom of God. Blessed are all they who put their trust in them.

XI

CALLED

"Called to be Jesus Christ's."
Rom. 1:6

"Called" is one of the great words of Scripture. In its various uses and applications it tells the whole story of the Christian life, its origin, its nature, its destiny.

(1) The origin of the Christian life. How does a sinner become a child of God? There are three steps or stages in the transformation. (*a*) There is a divine choice. In the counsels of eternity this choice was made. "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world." Eph. 1:4. To those that stand before his right hand the Judge shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:34. (*b*) There is a divine call. The believer is chosen in eternity, called in time. "Whom he foreordained, them he also called." He "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." II Tim. 1:9. The choice and the call are brought together in II Thess. 2:13, 14, "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you

through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." This call is both outward and inward. There is the call of the Word and the call of the Spirit. "He called you through our gospel," the preaching of the Word. "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10:14. "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Rom. 10:17. But before the hearing may become effectual to salvation, the truth must be brought home and applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. "The things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God." I Cor. 2:11. Through the Spirit comes that effectual call by which the mind is enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, and the soul is turned to repentance and faith.

(*c*) To the divine choice and call there is the response of man, which is faith. This too is of God. "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Eph. 2:8. The work of our salvation is all of God. He imparts the grace, he inspires the faith. The choice, the call, the faith, all are his. He chooses in eternity, he calls in time, he sends his Spirit to persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is offered to us in the gospel. To him be all the praise.

So clearly does the word "called" bring to light the origin of the Christian life. History is a long process of divine selection. Abraham was called of God by name, and Moses, the priest and the prophet, and all the saints of the Old Testament. What was

said of the high priest may be said of all who bear the Christian name. "No man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God." Heb. 5:4. To every follower Jesus speaks as to the Twelve: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you." Three times in the opening verses of this first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the word "called" is found: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle"; "among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's"; "to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Our call is as direct and personal as theirs, as the call of Paul himself.

(2) The nature of the Christian life.

To what are we called?

(*a*) We are called to holiness. They who are called to be Jesus Christ's are called to be saints. The word "saint" is greatly abused. Sometimes it is spoken with a sneer, as if it meant sanctimonious or Pharisaic or hypocritical. Sometimes it is reserved for those who have attained high eminence in Christian character or service. They are canonized by the Church. But the Church cannot make a saint; that is the office of the Holy Spirit. According to the New Testament every believer is a saint. The fundamental idea of holiness is consecration, a setting apart to the service of God. Not only persons, therefore, but places and things may be holy. A saint is a person who is separated from the world and devoted to God. And as that which is given to God must be the best, this consecration involves

moral purity, cleanness of heart and life. Every believer is a saint, but there are degrees of saintliness. It is not in accord with Scripture usage to speak of Saint Matthew, Saint John, Saint Paul, and the title is wisely omitted in the Revised Version. They are no more saints than the rest of us. More saintly indeed, it may well be; but that is another matter. There are degrees of faith, but every man who puts his faith in the Lord Jesus is a believer; there are degrees of holiness, but every believer is a saint.

Yet it is noteworthy that no man in the New Testament calls himself a saint. Paul wrote to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and calls them saints; but of himself he said, "I am less than the least of all saints." Every man feels that for him the name expresses rather a hope, a prophecy, than a fact. God gives the name, but he is not worthy of it. Holiness is the goal to which he is pressing on, but it lies far before him.

This is the first and great requirement of the Christian life. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Be ye holy for I am holy." God does not indeed require of us perfect holiness, for that no man in this life is able to attain. There are indeed those who profess to be perfectly sanctified, but their neighbors do not share their faith. But holiness is the first law of the Christian life, and we must strive with all our strength to keep it. We shall not be perfect here but we can ceaselessly press on toward perfection, can grow better and stronger with the progress of the years, can show God and our fellow

men that amid all the faults and infirmities that beset us we are praying, toiling, struggling against sin, seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, with earnest purpose to make his will the law of our life. This we can do, this we must do, if we would not bring reproach upon the sacred name we bear. Holiness is the primary and all embracing law of the Christian life. He who is not earnestly trying to be holy has no right to take upon himself the name of Christ. There can be no greater blasphemy, no fouler sin, than to drag the name that is above every name through the mire of an abandoned life. Other men bear the reproach of their own sins; the reproach of the unfaithful disciple is reflected upon his Master. Is it not enough that he suffered for us on Calvary? Shall we crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame? Our sins nailed him to the cross, our sins pierce his heart to-day. How often when he is asked, "What are these wounds?" he must make sad reply, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." By the holiness of God, the cross of Christ, the grace of the Holy Spirit, we are called to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

(*b*) We are called to peace. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body." Col. 3:15. The primary reference is to concord between Christian brethren. They form one body of which Christ is the Head. Do the members of the body turn against one an-

other? Do the teeth tear the flesh, and the fingers pluck out the eyes? There are those that mutilate themselves, but we call them madmen. "No man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it." Yet the members of the body of Christ sometimes bite and devour one another. The Roman soldiers would not rend his garment; his followers rend his body. It is as unnatural for Christians to hate one another as it is for the members of the body to be at war among themselves. Yet the spirit of jealousy and strife has always found a place in the Church. The Lord was compelled to rebuke it among his chosen followers. How often Paul was forced to deal with it in his letters; how earnestly he warns against it. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all." Therefore he bids us, "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and the charge must be perpetually repeated. There are no sadder pages in the history of the Church than those that record the unseemly strifes that have marred its unity and broken its power. The very night the Lord's Supper was ordained, the disciples fell to quarreling. And that table which was established to be the outward and visible sign of Christian union, in obedience to the command, "Drink ye all of it," has stood throughout the centuries since like a wall of division, parting Catholic from Protestant, Anglican from dissenter, Baptist from pedo-Baptist.

It is here at the Lord's table that the disciples of Christ find themselves most widely sundered, and will not hold fellowship together. Every feature of the ordinance has been erected into a barrier, the quality of the bread, as leavened or unleavened, the use of the cup, the nature of the wine, as the fermented or unfermented juice of the grape, the qualifications required for partaking of the sacrament. What Christ gave us as a badge of discipleship and a bond of union for all who bear his name, has been turned to an ordinance of separation and division and often of unseemly strife. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Let us love and serve one another as brethren.

But this peace is not concord between brethren alone. It has relation not to man only but to God. The peace of Christ is that tranquil rest, that calm satisfaction of the spirit which we find in him. It was his parting gift to his disciples. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." "My peace," the peace that abode in his own heart, he imparts to his disciples. They may rest in him as he found rest in God. The way of peace is prayer. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:6, 7. Prayer is the way of peace because it is the way to God. Where he is, there is peace. In our relation to one another and to God, Christ is our peace. We have in him the

peace of a good conscience, of a divine fellowship, of a joyful hope.

(*c*) We are called to liberty. "Ye, brethren, were called for freedom." Gal. 5:13. The immediate reference is to the bondage of the law, from which Christ has delivered us. But there is a larger reference, which concerns us more nearly. By nature we are in bondage to sin. "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." John 8:34. From this slavery Jesus sets us free. "The truth shall make you free." John 8:32. "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36. This spiritual freedom is the foundation of all civil and religious liberty. The *Magna Charta* is in it, the Reformation is in it, the Declaration of Independence is in it, the Emancipation Proclamation is in it. This word of our Lord is the root from which all liberty has sprung. There can be no true freedom to those who are the bond servants of sin. And he whom Christ has made free can be no man's slave.

But liberty has its limits and they are clearly drawn. It is bounded on one side by law. We are apt to set law and liberty over against each other, but in fact they are inseparable. Law is the limit but it is also the condition of liberty. Anarchy is not freedom but tyranny, for it means the unrestrained rule of the strong, the supremacy of might.

The law with drawn sword guards the rights and protects the interests of the weak, who without it would be the prey of the spoiler. To abolish law

would be to substitute the rule of might for the rule of right, and freedom would be trampled under the foot of oppression. It is only where law prevails that man may perform his duty and fulfill his destiny with the least possible interference from without. Independence is an idle dream. Serve sin or serve God, there is no alternative. In his service is perfect freedom, because only there may man attain the end for which he was created.

Peter has a striking phrase, "as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God." I Peter 2:16. Free, and bond servants of God. By nature we are bond servants of sin, by grace we become bond servants of God, and in his service we find liberty. Only the servants of God are free. James speaks of the law of liberty, the perfect law. Only through obedience to that law may liberty be won.

Law is to life as the rails to the engine. They confine it, but they confine it to the path of safety and power. The law of God is the track by which the life may surely reach its goal. It secures to us the only possible freedom, freedom to develop the nature God has given us according to his will.

On the other side liberty is bounded by love. "For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another." Gal. 5:13. We are not to use our freedom for selfish ends, but make it the servant of love. We are free that we may serve. George Macdonald says, "One of

the grandest things about rights is, that being ours we may give them up." "Christ also pleased not himself." "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus," who laid aside the glory of God, and took on him the form of a bond servant, that in love he might minister to men. That spirit was in Paul, who held himself always ready to surrender liberty at the call of love, to yield his rights if he might help a brother, and in love made himself servant of all.

Use your liberty which you have in Christ Jesus as bond servants of God, as servants of men. Liberty is limited by law and love.

(*d*) We are called to fellowship with Christ. "God is faithful, through whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." I Cor. 1:9. How close and intimate is that fellowship Christ himself has taught us. There are three names by which he designates the relation between himself and his disciples.

First, he called them at first bond servants, slaves. This is the term which is commonly used in the parables. He is the Master, the Ruler. They belong to him absolutely and forever. This they must understand and acknowledge as the basis of discipleship.

Second, as his life drew to a close, he gave them another and a dearer name. "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends." John

15:15. When they are prepared to own him as their Lord and Master, he calls them friends. Before friendship comes self-surrender. Friendship is the reward of obedience. "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things that I command you." In the Old Testament men are the servants of God, only Abraham and Moses are called his friends. Now all who accept Jesus as their Lord are friends of God through him.

The proof of friendship on the part of the disciples is obedience. On the part of Christ it is confidence and sacrifice. "All things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He has opened his heart to us, he has laid down his life for us. Let us answer his friendship with the love of our hearts and the obedience of our lives.

Third, after his resurrection he called them by another and yet more endearing name. He said to Mary as she stood beside the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection, "Go tell my brethren." Upon an earlier occasion, indeed, when he was told, "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee," he replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matt. 12:47-50. And in the picture of the last judg-

ment it is by their conduct toward "my brethren" that men are judged. But after he rose from the dead this name so rarely given before assumes a new significance. Its full meaning could not be disclosed until in all points, in life and in death, he had been made like unto his brethren. Only then could he bestow upon them in full measure the gift of his Spirit. He is our Brother because he wears our nature; we are his brethren because he imparts to us his nature. Through his death and resurrection he has given us the right to become children of God. As his brethren we are called to fellowship with him, in his character, his service, his glory.

And we must not forget that as we are called to fellowship with Christ, we are called to fellowship with his sufferings and patience. John writes to the seven churches as "your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus." Rev. 1:9. Peter tells us, "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." I Peter 2:20, 21. When Christ is commended to us in the New Testament as an example, it is always as a sufferer. If we have no part in his sorrow, we shall not taste his joy. "If we endure, we shall also reign with him." "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." He who would hold fellowship with Jesus must help him bear the cross. We

cannot walk with him if we shun the sorrowful way that leads to Calvary.

All to which we are called we find through fellowship with him. Are we called to holiness? He "was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." I Cor. 1:30. Are we called to peace? "He is our peace." "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1. Peace was the last gift he conferred upon his disciples before his death and the first after his resurrection. Are we called to liberty? "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

(3) The destiny of the Christian life. It is represented in various ways; which yet are one. Paul bids Timothy, "Lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called." I Tim. 6:12. We are called "unto his eternal glory in Christ." I Peter 5:10; to God's Kingdom and glory." I Thess. 2:12; "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." II Thess. 2:14; the glory of a Christlike character, a Christlike service, a Christlike reward. This is "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

So glorious is the end set before us, so abundant the provision for the way.

We are called with a high and holy calling, let us walk worthily of the calling wherewith we were called. We are called to holiness, and the name of Christ is named upon us: let us remember that "he

that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk as he walked." We are called to peace: let us dwell in peace with God, our fellow men, and ourselves. We are called to liberty: let us stand fast, therefore, and suffer ourselves to be entangled in no yoke of bondage. We are called to fellowship with him. Let us abide in him through faith, obedience, prayer. Thus walking worthily, striving to fulfill the purpose of our calling, we shall make our calling and election sure. Then we shall never stumble, and there shall be richly supplied unto us the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it," will perform every promise, will fulfill every desire of goodness, and every work of faith, with power; yea, will do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think to the glory of his name in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

XII

ILLUSIONS

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?"
Isa. 55:2

Life is full of illusions. The soul has its spectacles, and looks out upon the world through colored glasses. No man sees the world just as it is, and no two men see it just alike. Every man is in some degree the maker of his own world. We cast our own shadow on our surroundings. Even in the exact sciences allowance must be made for the personal equation. Man cannot make of himself a mere machine, divest himself of pride and prejudice and passion, and dwell in the cold, clear light of pure reason. The eye is only the window through which the soul looks out. Hamlet projected the shadow of his own disordered soul on earth and sea and sky, and nature was only the mirror in which he saw the reflection of himself. Taine said of Byron, "He dreams of himself and sees himself throughout." "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." "Surely every man walketh in a vain show." To see things as they are is a rare achievement, and they who look out upon the world with unclouded eyes are the leaders of the race—Socrates and Bacon and Shakspere and above all Jesus. Lord Bacon preaches a sermon on I John 5:21: "My little children guard yourselves from idols," and the ser-

mon has four heads. "There are four classes of idols which beset men's minds. To these, for distinction's sake, I have assigned names, calling the first class idols of the Tribe; the second, idols of the Cave; the third, idols of the Market Place; the fourth, idols of the Theater." These idols are the false notions which have taken possession of men's minds. Idols of the Tribe are those which belong to human nature; idols of the Cave are those which belong to the individual; idols of the Market Place are fashioned by the intercourse and association of men with one another. And idols of the Theater are shaped by the various dogmas of philosophies, and from perverted rules of demonstration. Here is a vast and fertile soil for the growth of illusion of every sort.

There are two kinds of illusions that demand our thought. The first is the illusions of youth. They spring from ignorance and inexperience, and are often as beautiful, and as fleeting too, as the pictures that the frost pencils on the windowpane. In the morning of life the sky is clear, the heart is light, the spirit buoyant. Hope is bright and the world is dear. Unhappy is the youth who wakes too soon to the stern facts of life, before he has grown strong enough to face them without a fear. These fond dreams of youth may shield us from the rough, hard realities of the world about us until we have come to the stature and the strength of manhood. Many a man feels that he has made a poor exchange in parting with the bright illusions of youth for the

sordid facts of later years. Wordsworth has painted the process of disillusion in colors that can never fade:

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close,
> Upon the growing boy;
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is nature's priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended:
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

There are other illusions that are not innocent or helpful, for they spring not from ignorance and inexperience, but from moral perversity, the hard heart, the stubborn will. They do not vanish with increasing years, but grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. Men cling to them more tenaciously at fifty than at twenty, and hug them to their breasts with trembling fingers on the verge of the grave. Time works no cure for illusions of this kind, but only deepens and confirms them. A man may be more pitiably blind and ignorant at the close of life than at its beginning. Then he had at least the capacity for vision and knowledge, and now even that is gone. Powers unused are lost. He who will not, by and by cannot.

It is to the greatest of these illusions that the prophet here refers. All men seek that which shall

be to the soul what bread is to the body, sustenance, strength, satisfaction. They must seek it, for the soul, too, has its hunger, an eager, fierce, insatiable craving that will not be denied. Hunger of body and of soul is the motive power of progress, the driving wheel of industry, the spring of civilization. We labor primarily that this hungry body may be fed. There are appetites of the flesh and of the spirit that will not suffer us to rest, but lay upon us the burden of incessant toil. As the body of man is akin to the brute, he hungers for food; as his soul was made in the divine image, he hungers for God. Always seeking, never resting, never satisfied, is the tale of human life.

Men seek to satisfy this craving of the spirit apart from God, to content a soul that bears the likeness of the infinite and the eternal, with the things of time and sense that perish in the using. This is the saddest and most pitiable illusion that can mock the soul. Visions of happiness float before us that vanish as we draw near, like the mirage of the desert. When a man of wealth was asked why he did not retire and enjoy the fruit of his labor, he replied, "I purpose to retire when I have enough." "And what do you call enough?" "Enough is a little more." So the rich man of the parable communed with himself: "What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? This will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many

years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'" The perplexity, the embarrassment of riches, the labor are here; the pleasure is deferred. If there is any truth which history and experience unite to proclaim it is that there is no peace for the soul of man apart from God. To seek peace elsewhere is to "spend money for that which is not bread," and "labor for that which satisfieth not."

What are the needs of the human soul which are satisfied in God alone?

(1) We are confronted by the fact of sin. Sin is not merely a theological term, it is a fact of everyday experience. We are not what we were made to be and meant to be, not what we might be and ought to be. The degree in which we fall short is the measure of our sin. Consider the guilt of sin. It deserves to be punished, it will be punished. There are those who tell us that God is too merciful to punish sin. But he is punishing it every day. Every pain that assails the body, every grief that torments the spirit, has come upon us by reason of sin. The world is full of the judgments of God upon sin. And if we may judge of his attitude toward sin in the time to come, from his attitude toward it to-day, he will never cease to hate and punish it, as long as it endures.

Consider the uncleanness of sin, how it defiles and pollutes the soul, turns the temple of God to an abode of evil spirits, infested with a brood of hell-born passions. Paul knew the anguish of it, felt that he was like a living man chained to a festering

corpse, and cried, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death!

Consider the discord of sin. We are not at peace with God. We are not in harmony with our neighbors. Selfishness prevails where love should reign. We are not in harmony with ourselves. So far as we know, man is the only being in the universe that has a double, a divided nature. All creatures beside are either good or bad; man alone is both good and bad. He wallows in the mire, he soars above the stars. In Byron's phrase, he is half dust, half deity. Two natures are ever at war within him. His heart is a battle field where heaven and hell contend. When he would do good, evil is present with him. This is the conflict which Paul has described with tremendous power in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. What reason have we to lift the prayer of the psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy name"? It is God alone who can overcome these discordant powers, and set the divine within us upon the throne of life.

(2) We are confronted again by the fact of eternity. "He hath set eternity in their heart," says the preacher." Eccl. 3:11. However long our days may be upon the earth, we do no more than cross the threshold of life. We were made in the image of the eternal, and we shall live forever. There are two forms in which the thought of immortality presses upon us.

(*a*) There is the sense of incompleteness. Just as we begin to learn how to live, we die. Our life is

cut off in the bud. We labor at our calling for twenty, forty, fifty years, and feel that we have hardly mastered the rudiments of it. We are just learning how to use the tool when we are called to lay it down. Does God expect us to learn to live in these few fleeting years, to exhaust in them the powers that bear his likeness? No man can reach his full stature in seventy or eighty years. A hundred years are required to make a tree; not years or centuries but ages are needed to make a man. Just as the hand has won a little skill, the arm a little strength, the brain a little cunning, the last long darkness falls upon us; the night cometh when no man can work. The best of us are only bungling apprentices at the business of life.

Those who are most proficient in their chosen calling are the first to confess how imperfect is their work. And if this be true of the labor of the hand, what an immeasurable sense of imperfection and incompleteness is borne in upon us when we contemplate our mental and spiritual condition, our character. Those who have climbed the highest are the first to cry with Paul, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on." They are conscious that they have taken but a single step on the pathway of life.

And with this sense of incompleteness is allied the consciousness of power. We are capable of being, of doing immeasurably better. Powers begin to stir within us like birds just spreading their wings for flight. Victor Hugo said, "I have been writing for

fifty years, poetry, drama, history, fiction, philosophy, and I have not uttered the thousandth part of what is in me." There are times in the lives of all of us when we are clothed with unwonted power, rise to unwonted heights. If we were always at our best, if we could only remain upon the heights to which now and then we climb, if we could abide forever in our brightest and serenest moods, how much larger and richer would the life become!

We are conscious of dormant powers, of capacities just beginning to awaken. We feel the stirrings of a nature struggling to be born. I am ignorant, but I am capable of wisdom; I am weak, but I am capable of power; I am selfish, but I am capable of love; I am sinful, but I am capable of righteousness. There are powers within me dimly felt, to which nothing is impossible. I am a poor, weak, sinful man, but my eyes can behold the face of God. My feet can scale the heights on which God sits enthroned. There is nothing I cannot do if space be given me. I have made poor work of my life thus far, but I know that I can do better if I may have another chance. If I could be transplanted to a sunnier clime, a more fruitful soil, I am persuaded that I should become far greater, better than I am. I want to be what I know I can be, I want to draw out these latent energies, to quicken these powers that are faintly stirring within me. The little I have done gives me assurance of greater work in the days to come: every capacity and power I possess seems to me a prophecy and promise of the future, and the cry

rises passionately from the depths of my spirit, O God, give me time, let me grow. Else life is all illusion.

Here our lives are as roots planted in the cold, dark ground. There is life in them, there is capacity of growth and beauty and fragrance. But this is life's winter. Soon the spring shall come with its quickening pulses and summer with its glowing suns, and then we shall put forth the flower and the fruit.

(*b*) There is the sense of injustice. All is not right with the world. It is full of disorder, cruelty, injustice, oppression. Since history began it has been the theater of strife. The strong play upon the weak. Bismarck compared Europe to a fishpond: Eat or be eaten is the law. How often has brute force triumphed over justice, and might trampled right beneath its feet! What page of history is not soiled by sin, stained with tears and blood? Throughout all their generations men have heaped iniquity upon iniquity until the awful weight were sufficient, but for the infinite mercy of God, to sink the earth beneath unfathomable seas of judgment. There is no earnest man upon whose heart these thoughts do not weigh heavily. Philosophy and theology find it one of their most arduous tasks to justify the ways of God to man. If he is almighty why does he allow unrighteousness to prevail? How can he look down upon the sufferings and distresses of men, and not stretch forth a hand to help them? How can he restrain himself in the presence of cruelty that curses

the earth? How can God endure the horrors of our time, when he has only to make bare his arm, and establish the reign of righteousness and peace? If God be holy, how can he allow iniquity to triumph? Whether he cannot or will not interpose, in either case how shall we recognize in him a God worthy of our homage and our trust? In the face of these questions there are those who conceive of him as a celestial figurehead, of whom it may be said as of the kings of France, He reigns, but does not govern. Others deny his existence outright, affirming that if there were a God the world could not present the spectacle which it presents to-day. And there are even those who believe in God as the Scripture reveals him, yet maintain that not God but Satan is the real ruler of the world to-day. Sometime he will take again the scepter, but now he suffers Satan to work his will.

Many are the answers that men have returned to the question, "Why does a holy God permit sin to do its deadly work?" To that question, if the present life were all, no answer could be given. If the life of man is bounded by the visible horizon, if this is the only home that he shall ever know, if there is nothing beyond the confines of earth and time, how shall we vindicate the character of God against those who say, He is blind or careless or impotent? If death ends all, life is a riddle without an answer.

But the time is coming, it must come if God is just, when men shall receive the due recompense of their deeds; when equal and impartial justice shall

be rendered to every one of us. This is the time of probation, of testing; now we do our work, there we shall receive our reward according to that we have done, whether it be good or evil. After the day's work is over, the laborers are summoned to receive their wages. We can understand this present life only as we view it in the light of eternity. Of itself it is poor, weak, broken, imperfect, a jumble of beginnings that have no end, foundations on which nothing is built, prayers without answers, strivings without results, labors without rewards. But this life is only the first step upon the path of immortality. Out of this scene of confusion and strife and incompleteness and injustice we pass through the gate of death into the Kingdom where justice and love and righteousness prevail, and eternity is given for our growth in the likeness of God. Forever and forever we shall increase in knowledge, in grace and power, ever taking upon us more of the blessed likeness of our Lord.

(3) There is the filial instinct. Augustine clothed the ultimate truth in its final form: "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee." "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is." This is the root of our restlessness, our discontent. The soul hungers for God and it tries to satisfy its cravings through the appetites and lusts of the flesh. We say, Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God alone is the food of the

soul. We shall never be satisfied until we find our Father. The soul cries out for truth, and men spread before it a sumptuous table and bid it feast and be content; it cries out for righteousness and they build for it a spacious dwelling, furnished with all that may charm the eye; it cries out for God, the living God, and they show it a comfortable balance in the bank. And then they marvel that it will not ease its cravings and its cries. These things can no more satisfy the spirit than a glass of wine can allay the thirst for knowledge. Pour the world into the soul, and it is empty still. God alone can fill it. It is the universal verdict of history and experience that man can find no satisfaction short of God.

There is a familiar story of a ship that lay becalmed upon a tropic sea. The crew were in dire distress. Their water was exhausted. The sun darted down his arrows of fire upon them. They were perishing of thirst. In the hour of their extremity they saw far off on the distant horizon the smoke of a steamer. They fixed their eyes upon it as their only hope. Slowly, very slowly it seemed to them, the vessel came into sight, drew nearer and nearer, until at length with parched throats and cracked lips they prayed, "Water, water, give us water or we die." And the answer came back: "Draw and drink. You are on the bosom of the Amazon." There are men to-day who are dying of thirst on the great river of God's love. There is grace sufficient for all their needs; and they have only to take it as it is freely offered to them in Christ Jesus. But in their blind-

ness and their sins they turn away and will not drink and live. Let us hear the invitation: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Let us put away every illusion, every idle dream. The soul is not mocked. It will never cease to strive and cry until it has laid hold upon the living God.

XIII

DEATH AND LIFE

"For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."

Gal. 2:19, 20

The truth owes much under God to its enemies. Many of the noblest words of our Lord were drawn out by the unbelief or malice of the Jews. The creeds of the Church are the fruit of controversy. In presence of error the Church is forced to define and establish the truth. False teachers in Galatia assailed Paul's character, impugned his motives, denied the gospel that he preached, seeking to substitute the law of Moses for the grace of Christ. They drew many after them. "O, foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?" "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel." This letter Paul wrote to vindicate himself and to establish the truth of his message. It is the *Magna Charta,* the Declaration of Independence, of the Christian Church, proclaiming its emancipation from the yoke of the law, and its liberty in Christ Jesus. "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

The letter is in great part personal. No man ever

wrote of himself more freely and fully than Paul, while no man is less open to the charge of egotism. He is concerned about his reputation, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the gospel which he preached. If it could be shown that his motives were selfish, the power of his message would be impaired. The letter tells therefore the story of his life, not merely of its outward course and activity but of its inward movement and disposition. He opens his heart, unveils his inmost feelings, desires, purposes; and writes his spiritual autobiography in a sentence. He always speaks of himself frankly, humbly. Before his conversion he was the chief of sinners; now he is less than the least of all saints. Here he tells us of the change that was wrought in him when he passed from death to life, how it was effected, and how Christ became all in all to him.

The story is comprehended in four great words.

(1) Death. He had lived the life of a Pharisee, a moralist. He had been the leader of the Jewish church against the Christian faith. As he was on his way to Damascus, breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, the risen Lord met him on the way in the white heat of his rage. In that instant the old life came to a sudden end. Saul of Tarsus died.

In what sense? Let him speak for himself. He died to the law. He had been trusting in the law for salvation, was striving to work out a righteousness of his own through obedience to the law that should be acceptable to God But he found the way

of the law was not the way of life. The law commands, the law condemns, the law cannot save. He could not find the peace of mind that he craved through obedience to the law. His own experience of the law proved that the law had no power to redeem from sin, and establish the heart in righteousness. The law itself bore witness in his experience to its own insufficiency.

But if this were all, he would have gone on the same way to the end. He would have fancied that the law failed to bring peace to his troubled spirit because he had not kept its commandments with sufficient zeal. He would have laid upon himself new burdens, plied the lash of conscience with redoubled vigor. The law might not yield the satisfaction that he sought, but the remedy would be more law. And in the vain endeavor to meet God's demands by his own obedience his life would have been spent. But Christ appeared to him. In that moment he caught a vision of another and better way than the way of the law. Then the truth was borne in upon his soul that what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God had wrought by sending his own Son. This gospel of free grace was not the product of reflection or experience; it was a revelation. The law had been given to lead men to Christ, he had put it in place of Christ. Now he saw him, recognized his Saviour and his Lord, and cried, "O Christ, take my sins and nail them to thy cross. Let me hang there with thee, that I may die unto sin."

In that hour through the law he died unto the law, through the cross he died unto sin.

Not that sin ceased to tempt, to vex, to defile. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he has portrayed with tremendous power the struggle that never ceased to rage within him. How pathetic is the cry: "For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." What then? What change took place in Paul's relation to sin when he turned to Christ? How does Paul the apostle differ from Saul the Pharisee? The moment he laid hold on Christ as his Saviour sin ceased to condemn. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." By nature a child of wrath, even as others, by grace he became a child of God. The curse of the law was lifted, for it was laid upon him who became a curse for us, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. Christ has made atonement for his sin and taken the guilt, the penalty of it, upon himself. He is no longer under the condemnation of sin, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and of death.

Not only did sin cease to condemn, but it ceased to control. "It is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me." Once sin and I worked together, now there is war between us. No longer is sin lord of my life, but Christ. Sin is an intruder, an alien. I am getting the mastery of it, and shall

one day trample it beneath my feet and cast it out. It was the master whom he obeyed, now it is the enemy whom he fights. When Jesus healed the demoniac with the command, "Come out of him," the evil spirit tore him, and threw him to the ground, and he wallowed foaming. The demon did all the harm he could, but he came out. The old man of sin dies hard, but he is dying. Sin is wounded unto death; the sins of the believer are the dying struggles of the old man of sin. It was well said by an old divine, "The believer is justified, that sin may not condemn, the believer is sanctified, that sin may not reign; the believer is glorified, that sin may not be." Those are the steps by which we climb to heaven.

(2) Life. Saul is dead, Paul is born. The old man is crucified with Christ, the new man rises with him to endless life. A devout Mohammedan prayed, "Give me a death in which there is no life, then a life in which there is no death." A wonderful prayer that might have come from the heart of Paul; and it is answered in Christ. In him Saul died to sin, in him he entered upon the life that shall never end. The self-life died, the Christ life was born.

Let us mark precisely the nature of the change that passed upon him as he began the new life in Christ.

It was a change from self-righteousness to the righteousness of God. He describes it in Phil. 3:9: "Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith

in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." He is no longer laboriously and painfully striving to win the favor of God by the works of his hands; he has laid hold freely and joyously upon the grace proffered to him in Christ Jesus. "I am no longer clothed in righteousness of my own devising, a thing of shreds and patches, filthy rags in the sight of heaven; but I am arrayed in the perfect robe of the righteousness of Christ, the Lamb of God offered for the sin of the world."

It was a change from hatred to love. Before Christ appeared to him, he was filled with rage against those who had never done him harm. "I persecuted this Way unto the death"; "being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." He thought that he was doing God service by putting his children to death. The spirit that dominated him was fanatical hatred of this heretical sect that recognized in Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah. Christ laid hold upon him in the heat and fury of his madness, and turned him from hate to love. Henceforth he loved and served those who hated him, reviled him, persecuted him, sought his life. The more they hated him the more he loved them. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." What had they done for him, these kinsmen for whom he would make the

supreme sacrifice? They had followed him with unrelenting hate through all his wanderings, had sought to blacken his character, destroy his work, take away his life. Five times they laid upon him forty stripes save one; at Antioch they stoned him, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. And in return for their hatred he gave them love without measure, for their persecution a ministry of untiring and unsparing service. Christ entered his heart, and love became the ruling passion of his life.

And again there was a change from the purpose of destruction to the purpose of salvation. The whole energy of his fiery nature had been thrown into the work of persecution; now it is thrown into the work of redemption. Hate destroys, love builds up, constructs. Hate accomplishes nothing, can only tear down. Love is the great builder. And throughout the remaining years of his life he gave himself with unmeasured devotion to the task of preaching in love the faith which he once destroyed, making himself all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.

We may sum up the nature of the change that passed upon Paul in two words of his own. Before his conversion, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." There speaks the Pharisee: "I thought." Immediately after his conversion he said, "What shall I do, Lord?" Then he took counsel with himself, now he seeks to know the will of

Christ. "I" thought; what wilt "thou" have me to do? The center of gravity of his life is shifted from self to Christ. Not his will but Christ's will is law. Christ is Lord, not I. In the old life he did what he thought he ought, now he does what Christ commands. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Christ is my life. He has learned from his Master to say, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

(3) Faith. How is Paul united to Christ so that he may say, "To me to live is Christ?" "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." Christ dwells in his heart by faith, so that the life which he now lives in the flesh he lives in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God. Through faith he surrenders himself to Christ, so that he and Christ are one. Faith opens the door of the heart that Christ may enter. Faith lays hold of Christ, and what is more important it gives Christ something to lay hold of. "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him," for faith is the soul's contact with God. Where faith is wanting, the soul is closed against him. By nature we are estranged from God. Grace comes to reconcile. Faith is man's response to grace. Grace is the hand that God reaches down from above; faith is the hand that man reaches up from below. When the hand of grace and the hand of faith clasp each other, the work of reconciliation is accomplished.

Faith issues of necessity in obedience. As we trust we follow. A woman once said to me, "I know

what faith in God is from my faith in my physician." It was through faith that Christ entered the heart of Paul, and established his Kingdom there. The power of faith lies not in its own worth or energy, but in its object. Salvation does not depend upon the weakness of faith but upon the might of grace. Feeble faith may lay hold upon a strong Saviour. Salvation is a gift, faith receives it. Grace is the hand that gives; faith is the hand that takes. It is the value of faith that it opens the way for grace, that the spirit may be brought into submission to the will of Christ. It is through faith that Paul has entered into this relation of loving intimacy and unmeasured devotion to his Lord.

(4) Love. What is the ground of faith, the reason for this surrender of self to the will of another? Why should Paul, strong man that he was, yield himself without reserve to the will of Christ, rejoicing in the loss of all things if he might win his favor? This is his answer, "Because he loved me and gave himself up for me." My faith rests upon his love, his sacrifice. I believe in him because he died for me. I love him because he first loved me. He gave himself for me, I give myself to him. He laid down his life for me, and I count not my life dear to myself if only I may do his will.

He loved "me," he gave himself up for "me." That is appropriating faith. The love that embraces all the world, the sacrifice offered for all the world, is mine. The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world is "my" Saviour. Me, me he loved;

for me, for me he died. This is the faith that avails, the faith that takes to itself the sacrifice that is offered for all the world, and says, It is mine.

This is the love of which Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us." He did not mean our love to him, poor, feeble, fickle, flickering flame, burning dimly at its best, almost extinguished at times by the gusts of passion and the blasts of temptation; but his love to us, fed from the heart of God, burning ever with a pure and steady flame. From eternity he loved us, and he shall never cease to love. This is the love which passeth knowledge. The night before he suffered Jesus told his disciples of his love to them. "Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end." But how shall he express the love that fills his heart and is about to lead him to the cross? By what figures shall he set it forth, by what analogies represent it? Shall he speak of the love of father, mother, husband? All these figures, drawn from the highest and holiest relations of human life, were exhausted under the old covenant. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "Thy Maker is thy husband." These are gracious words, beautiful and tender, and they speak to the heart with comforting power. But the love of God is about to manifest itself in a way unknown before, the way of sacrifice. The world has seen God upon the throne, it is about to see God upon the cross. This new manifestation of

love, how shall it be clothed in speech? Our Lord can find nothing on earth that may fitly image the tenderness of this love which is on the way to Calvary. He must ascend to heaven and search the heart of God. "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you." Only the love of God, infinite and eternal, the love of the Father for the Son, may worthily represent the love that Christ bears to his own.

This love, says Paul, this love of Christ to me, is the motive power of my life. I live and labor continually in the thought of it. I feel the impulse of it ever urging me on to service and sacrifice for him. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." II Cor. 5:14, 15. He died to redeem us to himself that we should be altogether his. His life was our ransom. Not with corruptible things as silver and gold, he bought us, but with his own blood. Therefore we are not our own, for we were bought with a price. This is the thought that is always driving Paul to new labors—I do not belong to myself but to Christ. He loved me, he died for me. I am his. Let me answer his love with my love, his sacrifice for me with my sacrifice for him, and make my life bear the likeness of his life.

This is the story of Paul's life, as we gather it from his own lips. He is dead unto the law and

unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ through faith, faith that rests upon the love and sacrifice of Christ. "By the grace of God I am what I am." That grace was extended to him in the person of the Son of God, and appropriated by faith. Through faith he has entered into such fellowship of life with Christ, that they are one. He has not ceased to be himself, rather he has found his true self in Christ, has become the man he was made to be and meant to be. But they are one in that his will is entirely submissive to the will of Christ, and that Christ is Lord of his life in every sphere. Christ's will is his will, for he seeks always to be well-pleasing to him. Christ rules his spirit, guides his thoughts, directs his steps, controls his energies, sweetly constraining him by the impulse of his redeeming love.

As this was the story of Paul's life, so it should be the story of our lives. If any of us are still under the curse and condemnation of sin, the way of escape is open. Let Christ take your sins and nail them to his cross. There only will you find forgiveness, peace of conscience, the favor of God, the hope of life eternal. Nowhere in all the wide universe save in the cross of Calvary may man make his peace with God. Say with Paul, He "loved me, he gave himself up for me." Lay hold upon him with the power of an appropriating faith, claim for yourself the salvation provided for all mankind, and your sins will be forgiven you for his name's sake.

If we have taken Christ as our Saviour the way of duty and of life is plain. Surrender yourself to him

without reserve. Live in constant fellowship with him through faith under the power of his love. In him death yields to life, life inspired by faith and rooted and grounded in love. Then shall you be filled unto all the fullness of God.

XIV

THE CHURCH

"The church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Eph. 1:22, 23

The theme of this epistle is the Church, as the theme of the Colossians is the Christ, and the theme of the Philippians is the Christian. Our Lord rarely spoke of the Church directly. Twice only did he use the word; once when he said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church"; and again when he told his disciples how to deal with a brother who had offended: "First speak to him alone; if he will not hear, take with you two or three witnesses; if he refuse to hear them, tell it to the church." But though he rarely referred to the Church by name, he made provision for its constitution and its needs, ordaining the Twelve to be its leaders, and the sacraments to be a badge of discipleship and a bond of union as well as a means of grace. The doctrine of the Church we owe to Paul with his genius for system and organization. And in this epistle in particular he treats of the nature and the functions of the Church, and sets forth the principles by which it must be inspired, directed, and controlled.

There are four figures that he employs to represent the Church:

(1) It is "the pillar and ground of the truth." I Tim. 3:15. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God under the old covenant; the Christian

Church is intrusted with the gospel. By the Church the knowledge of the truth is preserved and proclaimed. The truth is conveyed to men and commended to men by the witness of the Church. "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" To preach, to send, is the office of the Church. Christ has two living witnesses, his Spirit and his Church. The sacrifice of Calvary would be of no avail if it were not made known by the Church, and the benefits of it applied by the Spirit.

(2) It is the house or temple of God. This is a familiar New Testament figure, especially in the epistles of Paul. The individual believer is a temple, as the Holy Spirit dwells within him. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" I Cor. 6:19. In a larger sense the whole body of believers is the temple of God, in which each individual believer is a living stone. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" I Cor. 3:16. "We are a temple of the living God." II Cor. 6:16. "Ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." Eph. 2:19-22. "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." I Peter 2:5.

(3) The Church is the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife. In the fifth chapter of this letter, after treating of marriage, Paul adds, "This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church." The figure is borrowed from the Old Testament, where God is represented sometimes as the Father and sometimes as the Husband of Israel. Jehovah is represented as a jealous God, and idolatry is adultery. Yet this relation which God in the old economy guards with such jealous care, is transferred to Christ under the gospel. He is now the husband of God's people. What stronger evidence of his deity could be given? Paul learned this from Jesus, who called himself the bridegroom, and his people the bride.

(4) The Church is the body of Christ, as the text declares. The Church is the witness of Christ, the temple of Christ, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, that he may be all in all.

Jesus fulfilled his earthly ministry in a body of flesh and blood. He was subject to the same limitations of space and time that shut us in. He moved in a narrow sphere. Once only during the years of his ministry is it recorded that he set foot beyond the bounds of Palestine. The fruits of his immediate personal ministry were of necessity meager when compared with the breadth of his mission. It is probable that Peter won more souls to the Kingdom of God by a single sermon on the Day of Pentecost than Jesus gained in three years of constant labor.

When he ascended to the right hand of the Father,

and would enter upon his world-wide ministry, he took to himself a new body, a spiritual body, which is his Church, the whole company of them that love his name and do his will. Through this body he carries on his work, and performs his ministry, fulfilling the promise, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." His work in the body of the flesh was confined to a little strip of country, and bounded by the space of three years; the work that he carries on through his spiritual body is broad as the world, and shall continue until the glorious consummation of his Kingdom.

The Church is related to Christ as the body to the soul, and in this representation two great truths are involved.

(1) Christ is the life of the Church, as the soul is the life of the body. The body has no power, no will, no life of its own. It is simply a mass of clay that falls apart when the spirit is withdrawn. The Church depends upon Christ for its life as absolutely as the body on the soul. Without him there may be a society, an organization; there is no church. The Church is of him and for him and in him. It is his fulness. There are two possible interpretations of the phrase: (*a*) the Church fills up, completes, the purpose and the work of Christ. That is true. Through the Church is Christ's mission in the world fulfilled. He completes through his spiritual body what he began in the body of his flesh. But the

second interpretation is better. (*b*) The Church is filled by Christ, is the receptacle of his grace and power. He pours himself in all the plenitude of his wisdom, power, and love into the Church, and fills it with his own life. Then indeed do men have life, and have it abundantly. There is no limit to his gift of himself but the capacity of the Church to receive.

Fulness is one of the great words of the Scripture. There are four passages which taken together may open to us the riches of truth which it contains. First, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. Into the incarnate Son, God pours himself in all the fulness of his divine nature. There is nothing in Christ that is not in God; there is nothing in God that is not essentially in Christ. His human nature is filled and flooded with the divine. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I and the Father are one." Second, The Church is the fullness of Christ, as we read in the text. As Christ is the fulness of God, the Church is the fulness of Christ. God pours the fulness of his life into the Son, and the Son in turn pours the fulness of his life into the Church. Of all that he has received from the Father he withholds nothing from his people. All that he has is theirs. "All things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." What is there that Christ does not share with us? Is it knowledge? "All things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." Is it authority? "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Is it power? "All things are pos-

sible to him that believeth." Is it holiness? "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." Is it peace? "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." Is it joy? "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Is it love? "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you." Is it glory. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them." Even the throne that he purchased at such infinite cost he does not withhold from his people. "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne." Through Christ the wisdom, the power, the grace of God flow without ceasing into the life of the Church. Paul sums it all up in a single phrase: "He called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." II Thess. 2:14. His glory, the fulness of his divine perfections, he imparts to his people, whom he hath redeemed with his own blood that they should show forth his praise. As on the cross of Calvary he gave himself for them, so now upon his throne he gives himself to them in all the plenitude of his grace and glory. Third, "Of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace." John 1:16. He imparts himself to the Church through its individual members. He is in the Church as he is in the hearts of men. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but only in the spirits that he hath quickened with his own breath. The heart of man is

the home of God. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full." Col. 2:9, 10. He is filled with God, you are filled with him.

Fourth, Paul prays for the Ephesians that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith, "that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." Eph. 3:17-19. The fulness of God, that is the end, the goal of the Christian life, to be holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect. Man may reflect the likeness of God as the dewdrop may bear in its bosom the image of the full-orbed sun. The work of the Church will not be complete "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:13.

(2) The Church is the organ and instrument of Christ, as the body is the organ and instrument of the soul. If the body without the soul is dead, the soul without the body is impotent. We cannot work without the hand, or speak without the tongue, or see or hear without the eye or the ear, or think without the brain. For all practical purposes in the present life the soul is dependent upon the body. After all the labors of learned societies for psychical research it has not been shown that disembodied spirits play an appreciable part in the present order of the world.

Only through the body of flesh may the spirit express itself, accomplish its work, effect its purposes.

Of course we must not press the analogy too far. Christ is not dependent upon his Church in the same sense as the soul depends upon the body. He could do without us, if he would. The relation between us he has himself established, and he could have established it upon different principles. But he does not choose to do without us. He may work, at times he does work, directly through his Spirit. But ordinarily he chooses to work through his Church, which is his body. Through his Church he preaches the gospel, proclaims the Kingdom, draws men to himself. The service of the Church is essential to the fulfilment of his ministry. "Without me ye can do nothing," he said. And he says also, though the words must not be taken in the same absolute sense, "Without you I will do nothing." The Church is his body, and through his body he carries on his work.

There are certain characteristics of the body of Christ which he wore during his life on earth that must be reproduced in his spiritual body, the Church.

(*a*) Unity. The body is one because it is animated by one spirit. Every organ and member obeys one will. The unity resides in the spirit alone. When the soul leaves the body it crumbles to dust. There is nothing to hold it together except the life of the spirit.

The Church is one. If there is one head there can be only one body. In the divine purpose and in its

essential nature the Church in all its parts throughout the world is one. But this unity is overlaid and obscured and often denied. Our Lord prayed that all believers may be one, may all come to recognize the common life which they have in him. The unity for which he prayed was the union in spirit and life of all those who confess his name, a union that shall be manifested through brotherly love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Whether this brotherly spirit shall issue in course of time in unity of worship and organization is left to the future to disclose. The one thing essential is that we keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, and by love serve one another.

(*b*) Holiness. How pure was the body of Christ, offered to God in holy service, then in holy sacrifice, a Lamb without blemish and without spot. No stain of sin defiled his hands. His lips obeyed the law of truth and love. His feet never strayed in forbidden paths. His body was the obedient instrument of a holy spirit. His flesh was as pure and clean as his soul. Holiness is the law that he enjoins upon his Church, holiness, rigid, uncompromising, absolute; holiness that has its home in the heart, and rules with sovereign sway throughout the life. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," he said to his disciples, "ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." What was wanting in the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? They were well satis-

fied with it, and the people regarded them as the saints and patriots of the time. The fatal defect was that it was self-righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness that men seek, and Paul has plainly distinguished them in his letter to the Philippians, ch. 3:9, "Not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." There is the righteousness which man works out for himself through obedience to the law, there is the righteousness which he receives from God through faith in Christ. Self-righteousness has these fundamental traits: it is superficial, plays upon the surface of the life, has no power to reach and cleanse the heart. And it is selfish. He who believes that he has attained salvation through his own endeavors looks down with pride and contempt upon those who are too infirm of purpose to climb as he has done, and thanks God that he is not like the rest of men.

Perfect holiness we may not hope to attain in this life, but it is the goal toward which we must ceaselessly press on. We can abstain from those gross and flagrant sins that bring reproach upon the name we bear. We cannot plead the weakness of human nature to excuse drunkenness or theft or unchastity. It is possible to abstain from these heinous forms of sin with the aid of the Spirit of God, and there are millions of believers whose lives have never been polluted by them. We must make it plain to the world that we are trying with God's help to lead a

righteous life. And we must grow in grace, so that life becomes holier with the progress of the years. This we can do, this we must do, if we shall fulfil the command and follow the example of our Lord.

(*c*) Beneficence. Peter pictures the life of Jesus in a single phrase—"He went about doing good." He did not wait for men to come to him, he went to them. He sought the opportunity, he made the occasion. His life was spent in ministering to the needs of men in body and spirit. All churches, all individuals, that bear his name must abide this searching test, Do they minister? Are they the servants of men? If not, by what right do they claim to be his? That is the test that shall be applied in the judgment of the great day. As we have ministered or failed to minister in his name, so shall our sentence be.

A striking illustration is furnished in the fourth chapter of The Acts. Peter and John, unlearned and ignorant men, were arraigned before the sanhedrin. This was the question at issue, Is Jesus of Nazareth the Christ of God? These rude fishermen advanced an argument that the learned doctors of the law could not meet. It was not drawn from the interpretation of prophecy. There the scribes were prepared. This was the argument to which no answer could be found: "Seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." No reasoning could prevail against the fact that this man had been healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The standing arguments for Christianity are two—

Christ, and the man who has been healed in the name of Christ. As long as the Church can show the man that is healed it will abide; for he is the living witness of the power of the Name. The power of the Church is measured by its beneficence. It is strong in proportion as it serves. If it is the body of Christ ruled by his Spirit, it must minister. If it ceases to minister, it is no longer his. "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

(*d*) Sacrifice. He offered himself a sacrifice for his Church and the Church in turn must offer itself a sacrifice for him. Commentators have been much perplexed by Paul's words in Col. 1:24—"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." And at first sight the words are strange. Think of Paul, little Paul, making good the deficiency in Christ's sufferings! We may be moved to say with Festus, "Paul, thou art mad; thy much learning is turning thee mad." But a little thought will make it clear that here, too, Paul is speaking forth words of truth and soberness. In the atoning sacrifice of Christ, Paul, of course, claims no part. But he means that the Kingdom which was established by the suffering and sacrifice of Christ must be continued and completed by the suffering and sacrifice of his disciples. And in this work he claims a part. Sacrifice was an essential part, rather it was the heart and soul of Christ's ministry; and it must

hold the same place in the ministry of his Church. The spiritual body must be offered in sacrifice as the body of his flesh was offered on Calvary. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." It is only as the Church answers the sacrifice of Christ with the sacrifice of self, giving life for life, that it is truly his. Where there is no spirit of sacrifice, there is no Christ.

What limit may be set to the sacrifice which he requires? There is none. "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Our love, our sacrifice must respond to his. This spirit was in Moses when he cried, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Ex. 32:31, 32. This was the spirit of Paul when he said, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. 9:3. Words of this kind cannot be interpreted by rules of logic. They are the overflowing of a heart of love which is prepared for the utmost measure of sacrifice, if the desire of love may be fulfilled.

Martin of Tours was seated in his cell when some one knocked at the door. He bade him come in, and a stranger entered with lordly air. "Who art thou?" asked the saint. "I am the Lord Jesus," was the answer. But Martin was suspicious, as saints have reason to be in this evil world. And looking sharply

at him he inquired, "Where is the print of the nails?" and the Tempter fled abashed. No false Christ may stand that test. Jesus is known by the print of the nails. By this the disciples recognized him after his resurrection, and in heaven he appears as the Lamb that has been slain.

A young girl was charged by her dying mother to care for her younger brothers and sisters. She gave herself to the task with rare devotion, but it was too great for her slender frame, and she broke down beneath the burden. As she lay upon her deathbed, she said to the nurse: "I am afraid to meet the Lord Jesus. I have not attended church and Sunday school, and I fear that he will be displeased." The nurse smiled, and said, "When you meet Jesus, just show him your hands." Poor little hands worn and wasted with loving service in his name, will he not rejoice when he sees them, and bid her welcome to his Kingdom? Well the Master knows the print of the nails.

Such is the relation of the Church to Christ. It draws its life from him, and renders that life to him again in service and sacrifice. This life the Church receives, this service and sacrifice the Church renders, through its members. For the Church has nothing but what we give, does nothing but what we do, is nothing but what we make it. If these marks of unity, holiness, beneficence, and sacrifice which characterize his fleshly body are reproduced in his spiritual body, the Church, it will be only as they are reproduced in us, as the Spirit that dwelt in

Christ dwells in us, and we seek to follow him. The duty that is laid upon the Church rests upon us. It becomes us every one to ask ourselves, Am I, as a professed member of the body of Christ, living at peace with all who bear his name? Am I living a life of holiness, of beneficence, of sacrifice, for the good of man and the glory of God? He who to these questions may gratefully and humbly answer: "Yes. By the grace of God I am trying to live the life of Christ," is a member of the true Church, which is the body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

XV

THE PROVERBS

"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."

Prov. 1:1

The Psalms and the Proverbs live side by side upon the pages of Scripture. They represent the component parts of religion, the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the practical, the soul and the body. An old divine well said, "He that would be wise, let him read the Proverbs; he that would be holy, let him read the Psalms." One book is therefore fitly ascribed to David, the man after God's own heart, and the other to Solomon, the wisest of the sons of men. A great scholar aptly reminds us that in turning from the Psalms to the Proverbs we pass from David's closet of prayer to Solomon's school of wisdom.

On the threshold wisdom herself meets us, and bids us enter; a noble and benignant figure, arrayed in all the dignity and grace that may commend her to the admiration and the love of men; prophetic of the Christ, who is the word and the wisdom of God. In the Old Testament and in the New wisdom is clad in flesh and blood, and speaks with human lips. The wisdom of Proverbs is the Christ of the Gospels.

Sometimes religion puts on her beautiful garments, moves with stately step to the house of God, kneels before the altar with humble confession, with

devout thanksgiving, with exultant praise. So Milton pictures her, a pensive nun, devout and pure, her looks commercing with the skies, her rapt soul sitting in her eyes. That is the religion of the Psalms. Then she leaves the altar and the house of God, turns her steps homeward, puts off her splendid robes, dons her everyday attire, her working clothes, and busies herself with the round of daily tasks. Religion can turn her hand to anything, is a maid of all work. The religion that is found at the altar of God on Sunday, may be found at the washtub on Monday. That is the religion of the Proverbs.

In the godly life these are never separated—the religion of Sunday and of Monday, of worship and of work, of prayer and of practice.

The order of Scripture is the order of experience. First is the religion of the Psalms, then the religion of the Proverbs. What is the theme of the Psalms? The fear of God. What is the theme of the Proverbs? Wisdom. But the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. Solomon the wise is the son of David the devout. Religion is enshrined in the heart, then manifested in the life. Proverbs teaches us how the spirit of the Psalms may embody itself in the routine of common tasks. This is the way the fear of God will show itself in the daily course and conduct of life, in the interests and relations and activities of the world. This is the mode in which devotion will express itself in duty. This must be the manner of life of the man whose heart is a temple of the Most High.

Thus the Psalms and the Proverbs represent being and doing, character and conduct, disposition and action, faith and works. God has joined them together, let no man put them asunder. The attempt is often made to separate them, but they cannot dwell apart. Divorced from the religion of the Psalms, the morality of the Proverbs sinks to the level of a shrewder and more enlightened form of selfishness. We say honesty is the best policy, and it is true. But if that is my only motive in the matter, I am politic, not honest. For honesty belongs primarily to disposition. If I covet, I am a thief at heart. If I am honest only because I think it pays, I will be dishonest when I think it will pay me better. The honesty that has no deeper root than expediency is a timeserver and a hypocrite, for sale to the highest bidder.

On the other hand, if the religion of the Proverbs is rooted in the Psalms, the religion of the Psalms bears fruit in the Proverbs. One is the soul, the other the body. The body without the soul is dead, the soul without the body is impotent. The soul is the life of the body, the body is the organ and instrument of the soul, through which it expresses its nature and carries out its will. The religion of the Proverbs alone will sink to sheer selfishness, supposing that godliness is a way of gain; the religion of the Psalms alone will decline to a dreamy sentimentalism, which mistakes indolence for meditation and self-indulgence for devotion. Morality without religion is an empty show; religion without morality is

an idle dream. You cannot show religion unless you have it; you cannot have it unless you show it. Religion is the fear of God in the heart; morality is the fear of God in the life. Let the Psalms teach us how to worship, and the Proverbs how to work. Then shall we be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing: then shall the whole man be sanctified, body, soul, and spirit.

The religion of the Bible has been termed impractical, unsuited to the present life, and adapted only to that ideal state, that golden age, which lies hidden in the mists of the far distant future. "Otherworldly" is a favorite term to describe its character. One of the great books of the world is the "Social Contract" of Rousseau, the Bible of the French Revolution; the work of a man whom some have ventured to call the most influential teacher of mankind since the days of Jesus and his apostles. In this book Rousseau affirms that "Christianity is an entirely spiritual religion, concerned solely with heavenly things; the Christian's country is not of this world. He does his duty, it is true, but he does it with a profound indifference as to the good or ill success of his endeavors." "Christianity preaches only slavery and dependence . . . True Christians are made to be slaves." "Christian troops are excellent we are told. I deny it; let them show me any that are such. For my part I know of no Christian troops."

We ask in wonder as we read these words, had he never heard of Cromwell's Ironsides a hundred years

before? Their enemies at least were thoroughly convinced that they were good soldiers; these men of whom Macaulay says that they moved to victory with the precision of machines, while burning with the wildest fanaticism of Crusaders; these men whose backs no enemy ever saw and before whose face no enemy could ever stand. It would be interesting to learn the opinion of the Cavaliers regarding this judgment of Rousseau. And where in all the earth does political liberty prevail that is not the offspring of the freedom which Christ has brought to men?

We have been told that the Christian fixes his eyes on heaven, and absorbed in contemplation of celestial scenes forgets that his feet still press the earth. As a picture of the actual conduct of Christian men, this representation is simply grotesque. Where are these men that go about with their heads in the clouds, and hardly know whether they are in the body or out of the body? Does anybody know them? Has anybody seen them? In times past there were those who sought to isolate themselves from the world, withdraw from its cares and interests, and devote themselves to the culture of their own souls. But we should have to search far and wide to discover men of that type to-day. No class of men shall we find more interested, active, efficient in every walk of life than those who bear the name of Christians. They are leaders in every sphere of thought and action. They control great business

enterprises, they direct the policy of nations, they are shaping the fortunes of mankind.

This representation of the Christian is as remote from the teaching of the Scripture as it is from the facts of history. There are, of course, passages of the Scripture which, taken alone, might seem to imply that the Christian life is altogether other-worldly. I can prove anything from the Scripture if you will let me choose my texts and will promise not to answer, It is written again. Paul bids us seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God; set our minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. But he also bids us render to every man his due, and love our neighbors as ourselves, and do good unto all men as we have opportunity. The Master who said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," said also, "Ye are the salt of the earth, . . . ye are the light of the world." One word transports us to the skies, the other brings us back to earth again. We are citizens of heaven, but we are residents of earth, and so long as we abide in the flesh we serve the heavenly Kingdom by fulfilling the tasks of the earthly life.

In fact, the Bible is the most homely, the most practical of all the great religious books of the world. There is no other that gives such space to the common affairs of life, offers such counsels, provides such minute directions for the conduct of our busi-

ness, the doing of our duty, the filling of our place in this present world. No book besides concerns itself so profoundly and particularly with the common tasks, interests, activities, relations, pleasures of men.

It may be said, indeed, that a large part of the Bible is not religious at all in the sense in which we often employ the term. We insist on confining religion to the sanctuary and the exercises of devotion. We distinguish sharply between the sacred and the secular, and properly used the distinction has its place. But no rigid line can be drawn. The secular cannot be set apart from the sacred as if they were wholly independent of each other. The Bible does not respect our distinctions, but overleaps them, and draws together what we seek to divide. We say the sacred is the sphere of religion, the secular is the sphere of the world. But we cannot draw a line and keep the Bible on one side of it. The secular and the sacred alike it claims for God. We cannot call it a thoroughly religious book, religious in all its parts, unless we broaden our conception of religion. There are whole books which are not religious in any narrow sense of the term. There is Esther, in which the name of God does not occur, which appears to move entirely in the sphere of secular history. There is the Song of Solomon, a passionate love poem. But in a larger sense both these books are profoundly religious, for one discovers the hand of God in history, and the other portrays with matchless beauty that ardent love which finds its highest

and noblest expression in the union of the soul with God. The book of Proverbs gives far more space to work than to worship, to the week than to the Sabbath, to the world than to the Church. It is concerned chiefly with the secular life, as we call it. It is more at home in the street, the market place, than in the closet or the synagogue. It has far more to say of our conduct in the world than of our behavior in the house of God. Our thoughts are turned outward rather than upward, fixed rather upon our duty to our neighbor than our service to God. It is vain to try to shut religion up in a corner. We sometimes conceive of life as of a modern steamship, divided into distinct compartments. Here is a place for business, here for politics, here for pleasure; and here is a quiet little corner for religion, where it may be out of the way. And we say, Kindly stay there. Be good enough to mind your own affairs, and let me attend to mine. You may direct my devotions, but let my business, my pleasures, my politics alone. I will do as I ought on Sunday, I will do as I please on Monday. I will respect the law of God in the sanctuary, I will consult my own interest and pleasure in the world. We say, Business is business; but it is not. Business is religion, part of it. So is politics. so is pleasure. Religion lays its hand upon all that concerns men, every interest and activity, and says, It is all mine. I claim it for the King.

Religion will not be shut up in a corner; it will not be satisfied to appear in shining raiment on Sunday, and go into modest retirement during the

week. It is eager, curious, inquisitive, meddlesome. It insists on knowing what you are doing, and why. It pries into every nook and corner of life. If you are not willing that it should intrude everywhere, you will do well to shut it out altogether. For when once it enters it sets about doing thorough work. It inquires how you keep your accounts, how you handle your tools, how you treat your neighbors, how you pay your debts, how you study your lessons, how you order your household, how you govern your tongue, how you earn your money, what you spend and what you save and what you give. Nothing escapes its scrutiny.

Read this book of the Proverbs and mark how it sweeps the whole range of our interests and relations. What does it not embrace? Buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, the training of children, the care of the household, the use of money, the value of a good name, the use and abuse of the tongue, table manners; from the highest to the lowest concerns of life, nothing is wanting. A complete code of manners and morals is provided here. Religion does not walk with its head in the clouds. The economic virtues are enjoined. Questions of the first importance in our time are discussed and determined—temperance, the social evil, honor and honesty in business, national righteousness. Truly this is a net that gathers of every kind.

All this is so obvious that the book has been charged with sheer worldliness. It is a collection of maxims of worldly wisdom, shrewd but selfish. It

teaches a man how to get on in the world, is a handbook of utilitarian ethics and nothing more, has no more religious character than Poor Richard's Almanac. Why is it given a place in the sacred volume?

There are portions of the book that, taken alone, may give color to the charge. But the Proverbs does not stand alone. It is part of a great volume, a chapter in a great book. Its message must be interpreted in the light of the whole record. And we must keep in mind continually the relation which it sustains to the Psalms. There lies the key to the interpretation of the book, for there we find the spirit which is here expressed. Wisdom is the fruit of the fear of God, that deep-seated, abiding, filial fear, blended of reverence and love, which issues in implicit obedience to his will. The fear of God that in the Psalms expresses itself in burning words, in the Proverbs shows itself in deeds; and the words and deeds spring from the same root. Morality is religion in its everyday garb, its working dress. Morality is religion at work. When we worship we call it religion; when we work we call it morality. But it is the same spirit, the fear of God manifesting itself now in this way, now in that. For the religion of the Scripture nothing is too high, nothing too low. Like the Master, though its home is above the stars it stoops to the lowest place, the most menial service. What may we not expect of a religion whose Lord is over all, blessed forever, but came into the world to minister, to take the form of a servant, and bowed

himself to wash the feet of man—sovereign of all and servant of all?

Proverbs is the book of applied religion. Theory is reduced to practice. Thoughts and emotions clothe themselves in action. The teaching is plain, practical, prosaic, is mainly concerned with the trivial round, the common task. Here are no raptures, no ecstasies, no visions, no opened heavens, no celestial flights, no mounting as on eagle's wings above the skies, no glimpses of the glory that shall one day be revealed. Our eyes are fixed upon the ground, and rarely are they lifted to the skies. We might choose as the motto of the book the twenty-sixth verse of the fourth chapter as it is rendered in the Authorized Version: "Ponder the path of thy feet," look where you are going; or in the language of the New Testament, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk."

"This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." Fear God, that is the word of the Psalms; keep his commandments, that is the word of the Proverbs. Let the fear of God dwell in the heart, and direct and control the life. The Psalms point out the pathway to the skies; the Proverbs indicate the path of daily duty: and the two are one. For to do our daily task as it comes to us faithfully and in the fear of God, that is the way to heaven.

XVI

THE MASTER'S PRAYER

A study of the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John.

The priest of the old economy was charged with a threefold office, teaching, intercession, and sacrifice. Each of these offices the Lord Jesus fulfilled in the last hours of his life. He taught his disciples by example and by word, as John records in chapters thirteen to sixteen of his Gospel; he interceded for them in the prayer contained in this chapter; he offered himself a sacrifice for them upon the cross of Calvary. Two seasons of prayer marked the close of his life. In Gethsemane he prayed alone, for himself, with heart-broken cry, as his spirit was crushed beneath the burden of the world's guilt. Here he prays for himself indeed, but chiefly for his disciples; in their presence, calm, confident, serene. John the beloved invites us to enter the upper chamber and hear the Master pray.

Jesus was a man of prayer, but this is the only extended prayer of his that has been preserved. The burden of it is that God may be glorified. To glorify him is to make him known. It is the crowning glory of God to reveal himself, to impart himself. And in this revelation of himself is comprehended the highest good of the creature; for to know him is life eternal. He prays that God may be made known to all men, that all may be filled and flooded with the

divine life. That this may be accomplished he prays first for himself: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee." His intercession is grounded on his sacrifice. He prays the Father to accept the service and sacrifice he has rendered; and in return, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." How indissolubly blended is the glory of the Father and the Son. I have glorified thee, glorify thou me, that I may yet more highly glorify thee.

Was this prayer answered? Paul tells us. In Phil. 2:9-11 he speaks of the threefold state of Christ; before the incarnation when he was in the form of God; his incarnate state, when he assumed the form of a servant; and his exalted state, in which he abides forever. And in the description of this state of heavenly exaltation observe how exactly it is shown that the prayer is answered. He asked that God would glorify him, and he gave him the name which is above every name; he asked this that men might be saved, and unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord; the final purpose of the prayer is that God may be glorified, and all the honor accorded him is unto the glory of God the Father. John who heard the prayer, saw the prayer fulfilled, as in the visions of Patmos he beheld the glory of the risen and exalted Christ, and heard the song of the redeemed, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory,

and blessing"; and the whole creation thundered its Amen.

Then he prays for his disciples, and not for them alone, but for all who believe on him through their word. With that blessed company we may reverently and humbly take our place, assured that we have a part in the Master's prayer. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and prays for us by name as he prayed for them. What does he ask for his people to-day? This prayer shall teach us. For the needs of the disciples are our needs, and he prays for us as he prayed for them. The same petitions are upon his lips to-day, as he presents us before his Father's throne.

He lays bare his thought of us, his desire for us, his will concerning us. The prayer of the Master must be the purpose of the disciple. What he asks for us we must strive with all our strength to fulfil. We have here set before us in the most appealing and compelling form the law of the Christian life. His prayer to God on our behalf indicates the manner of life that he would have us lead, and every petition is at the same time a command.

There are four petitions embraced in the prayer:

(1) Keep them. V. 2. He knew how weak they were, how ignorant, how foolish, how prone to go astray, how slow to believe. They shall be persecuted for his name's sake. They shall be tried and tempted. While he was with them he kept them; but soon he shall be taken away and they shall be scattered as sheep having no shepherd. He commits

them to the care of the heavenly Father. "Father, keep them in thy name," in that blessed revelation of truth and grace which thou hast granted unto men through me. There may they abide.

He does not ask that they may be taken out of the world, that they may accompany him as he ascends beyond the skies. The believer needs the discipline of the world, and the world needs the witness of the believer. There are lessons that may be learned only in this earthly life, patience, endurance, all those lessons that spring from the hard and bitter experiences that befall us here. There is no place for them in the world above. If they are ever to be learned they must be learned on earth. And there is service that may be rendered only here. A larger and richer service awaits us in the life to come, but there are forms of service that are confined to this present life. The work of winning lost souls to Christ lies open to us only during this earthly life, so far as we are told, and if we do not perform it now it must remain forever undone. We do not know indeed that there is any kind of service that we may render to mortal men after death has overtaken us. How urgent then is the call of duty. "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4. So far as we understand, the time of earthly service ends when the earthly life is closed.

The prayer is not that they should be taken out of the world, where they have much to learn and much to do, but that they may be kept from the Evil One,

the prince of this world. He is about to sift them as wheat. He shall never cease to tempt them as he tempted their Master. They are weak and sinful. This very night they have been disputing among themselves, dreaming of thrones and crowns under the shadow of the cross. Nothing but the hand of God can hold them safe. And to that divine hand he intrusts them, that hand of which he said, "My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." John 10:29.

For us he offers this prayer without ceasing—"Father, keep them." Keep them from the Evil One. He does not ask that we may be separated from the world, secluded, shielded from temptation and trial. But he prays that in the midst of the world's business and conflicts and seductions and sins we may be kept pure and clean. In trial and temptation keep them true. Let nothing draw them or drive them from God.

(2) Sanctify, consecrate them. V. 17. Fit them for the service to which they are called. Jesus is sanctified and sent; the disciple is saved, sanctified, sent. "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." When he appeared to them after his resurrection, he said to them, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." "And when he said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In these words and this symbolic act he declared that he sent them upon the same mission upon which he himself

was sent, and that he clothed them with the same power.

Their consecration rests upon his. "For their sakes I sanctify, consecrate, myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." He consecrated himself to our salvation that we might be consecrated to his service. "I have glorified thee," he said; "I am glorified in them." As he made God known to them, so they in turn are to make God known to men in him.

(3) Unite them. Vs. 20, 21.

Sin divides; we turn every one to his own way. Grace unites. The ways of sin are many, the way of grace is one. As men find their common center in God, and are drawn to him, they are drawn to one another.

There are three characteristics of the unity for which our Lord here prays:

(*a*) It is catholic, embracing all who believe on him as he is offered in the gospel. Every believer is a member of the holy Catholic Church, which is the body of Christ. "That they may all be one." The Church, the true Church, is one. Believers are united to one another because they are united to him. But this essential unity is often forgotten or even denied. Jesus prays that it may be apprehended and embraced by all who bear his name. They are one, may they know that they are one. The divine idea of the Church is gradually and imperfectly realized in human experience; but one day it will be seen that in Christ there cannot be Greek and Jew, circum-

cision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but he is all, and in all.

(*b*) It is spiritual—"that they may be one, even as we are one." The oneness of the Father and the Son consists in the possession of a common life. They are one because they have one life. The unity of the Church is the unity not of creed or organization or form, but of life. The Spirit of Christ is the life of the Church, and because he dwells in the hearts of believers they are one. They are one by virtue of the one Spirit in whom they live and move and have their being. Having one life they are animated by one motive, seek one end. Here again the divine purpose is gradually wrought out in human experience. Because believers are not wholly brought under the sway of the Spirit, but are still ruled in part by selfishness and sin, their union is imperfect. In the degree in which they are subject to the will of the Spirit they are conscious of their fellowship with all in whom the Spirit dwells. In so far as the divine life beats full and strong in the hearts of the people of God it will express itself in unity of spirit and motive and service.

(*c*) It is visible. "That the world may believe that thou didst send me"; "that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." But how shall the world be led to believe in Christ and know Christ through the oneness of his Church unless that oneness be made visible? There must be some outward mark of this spiritual unity whereby it may be recognized.

What is the visible sign of the unity of believers? "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:35. The outward sign of Christian unity is brotherly love.

This is the essential nature of that oneness of believers which Jesus prays may be realized in his Church. In what way this unity may find expression, whether it shall issue in unity of organization and doctrine, we do not know. But of this we may rest assured, that the multitude of discordant and sometimes belligerent sects into which the Christian Church is rent asunder will not continue forever to bring reproach upon the common name they bear. Many of these bodies can give no sufficient reason for existence. They had their origin in circumstances and conditions which have long since passed away. The work of reconstruction and reunion has begun, and the day is not far distant, we may fervently hope, when instead of the present chaos of two hundred churches, most of them small and weak, having no distinctive message to deliver, standing for no principle that is not more adequately represented and supported elsewhere, we shall have a few great historic churches, each representing some great moment in the history of the Kingdom, some fundamental truth, some form of doctrine or mode of administration or worship which in the course of divine providence has been especially committed to its care; and all united through the Spirit of Christ in faith and love and good works unto the glory of God. In that day, when Presbyterians and Methodists and

Baptists and Lutherans of every name shall each be gathered into one great church instead of being broken into fragments as they are to-day, we shall recognize more clearly the unity of believers, and the prayer of our Lord will draw near its fulfilment.

(4) Glorify them. "I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." V. 24. The vision of his glory exerts a transforming power even in this present life where we behold him through the veil of sense and sin. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." II Cor. 3:18. His earthly glory he imparts to us even here. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them." His heavenly glory he shall share with us in the life to come. "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." I John 3:2. We shall behold, we shall share, his glory, shall even sit with him on his throne. He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." His going is itself the preparation, for where he is there is heaven to the believer. To be with him, to be like him, is heaven.

Thus he prayed for himself, for his disciples. But the prayer does not stop with them; it reaches beyond the Church and embraces all mankind. The world was not forgotten. How could it be, when he was just about to die for the world? The intercession is as broad as the atonement. The Lamb of God

that taketh away the sin of the world, shall he not pray for the world? He said, indeed, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me." But he did not mean that the world had no part in his thought, his prayer. He prayed first for himself because on God's acceptance of his atoning sacrifice the whole work of redemption depends. Then he prayed for his disciples to whom his grace has been made known that it may accomplish in them its perfect work. But he looks beyond them to the great multitude of those who shall believe through their word, and to the world that lies in the Evil One. He prays that the world through them may be led to knowledge and to faith. "That the world may believe," "that the world may know." It is through the disciples that the world must receive the gospel. The sanctification of the disciples must precede the salvation of the world. They have received the knowledge of the truth from him; the world must receive it from them. Therefore he prays that they may be prepared for their ministry, and that through them the world may be won to God. They are called out of the world, then sent into the world as he was sent, and their mission is as broad as his. Through him God is revealed to his disciples, through his disciples to the Church, through the Church to the world. No limits may be set to his grace and power beyond those which he has himself imposed; and he declared that while many through sin and unbelief shall come short of eternal life, yet mankind as a whole shall be re-

deemed. The race that fell in Adam shall be restored in him. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." Lifted up upon the cross of Calvary, lifted up upon the throne of his glory, lifted up in the witness of his disciples by whom he is openly set forth crucified, he is gathering the world unto himself.

It is the burden of his prayer that God may be glorified, glorified in the service and sacrifice of his Son, in the sanctification of believers, in the salvation of the world. For his disciples, for us, he prays that we may be kept from sin, sanctified for service, united in love, glorified with him.

In these last words Jesus bestows two parting gifts. He committed his disciples to the Father, he committed the world to his disciples. They stand between God and the world, receiving his grace that they may make it known to men. He committed us to the Father; there lies our safety. He committed the world to us; there lies our service. To keep ourselves in the love of God, and to fulfil our ministry to the world, is to be in harmony with our Lord's desire and prayer for us, and to do his will, which is the law of our life.

XVII

CONTENTMENT

"Be content with such things as ye have."
Heb. 13:5

Men are by nature prone to extremes. Some are boastful. What they have is always the best. They hold themselves in high esteem and their own excellence is reflected upon their surroundings. Others are fretful. Their lot in life is the hardest, their sorrows the sorest, their sufferings the keenest. Between these extremes of boastfulness and fretfulness lies the golden mean, contentment. "Be content with such things as ye have." If you believe that your circumstances are ordered by God's providence there is no room for boasting. It is excluded. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" You will not take to yourself the credit of your prosperity, but give thanks to God. There is no place for fretfulness or complaining. If I believe that the events of life befall by chance or fate, that they are directed by no intelligent purpose and serve no worthy end, I shall rebel against all that is hard and bitter. But if I believe that troubles, too, are from the hand of God, the same hand that bestows upon me blessings without number, and that he is infinite in wisdom as in love, that his love never fails and his wisdom is never at fault, I can endure the se-

verest trials without a murmur because I am persuaded that they serve his purpose.

What is this contentment that the Scripture enjoins? We are confronted at once by the distinction between the circumstances and the self. We are commanded to be content with our circumstances, but not with ourselves, with what we have but not with what we are. "Be content with such things as ye have." We reverse the rule. Our discontent fastens upon our condition. If you ask a man, "Are you satisfied," he will tell you, "No. There is much that I should like to have—more business, more money, more of the luxuries of life." Instinctively his mind turns to his outward state. How many men will say: "No, I am not content. I want to be a better man. I want more knowledge, more faith, more righteousness, more love"? If the energy we devote to bettering our condition were applied to bettering our character what progress we should make. Buddhism bids men seek the goal of life through self-suppression; Christianity, through self-development. Make the most of yourself. Never rest until you have climbed the heights where God sits enthroned, and taken your place beside him as a son. You are made in the image of the Almighty, be content with nothing less than this, that you be filled unto all the fulness of God.

Christianity does not forbid aspiration, ambition, the endeavor to improve our circumstances and better our condition. It does not bid men remain poor because they were born poor, if they have a chance

to rise; nor remain in a low place if a higher place is open to them. It enjoins the economic virtues, industry, thrift, diligence, self control, the qualities that command success in every walk of life. It forbids those vices that hurry men to ruin. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." If this is God's world success can be won only by obedience to God's law. You cannot rise by trampling the Commandments under foot.

Contentment not only does not block the way of ambition, but it is its most potent ally. The way to prosper is to do the work of to-day with a tranquil heart. Do you do your best when you are anxious and worried? What is it that wears men out, cuts them off before their prime, hurries them to premature graves? Is it work? Or is it worry? Work is of God, enjoined upon Adam in paradise. Worry is of the Devil. Man never worried until he sinned. Work brings sound sleep and hearty appetite; worry brings wakeful nights, shattered nerves, impaired digestion. Work strengthens mind and body; worry, like a consuming fever, burns the life out. The laws of nature cry out with the word of God, Don't worry. Don't lie awake at night bemoaning the mistakes of to-day. You cannot do to-day's work over again, you cannot do to-morrow's work until to-morrow comes. And the best preparation for the labors of the morrow is sleep. When the day's labor is over let it go. If you have made poor work of it, thank God you are done with it; ask him to forgive

you and go to sleep, that you may do better to-morrow. Do not shoulder the burdens of to-morrow until you must. God sets the nights between the days that we may roll off our cares in sleep. Then we awake strong, refreshed, vigorous in mind and body, ready for whatever the day may bring. Do you drag the day into the night, burdening your soul with regret for the past and anxiety for the future? Every day has its share of mistakes and sins. Bring them all to God as the night draws on and say to him, My Father, the day is marred with follies and faults. I pray thee forgive me, and help me do better to-morrow. And he will say, I forgive you, my child. Now go to sleep. There are many of us to whom obedience to this command would mean added years of life and vast increase of power. There is no place for fretfulness or worry in the well-ordered life. If you can do better, do it. If not, why complain about it? Be content with to-day, not as an end but as a stepping-stone, a stage in life's journey. Be like the traveler who enjoys the scenery while he is speeding toward his home. Let each day have its own measure of contentment and thanksgiving, each night its quiet, peaceful rest. Make your sleep as well as your labor a part of your religion. It is as needful to sleep well as to work well. Bodily conditions that we cannot control may deny us restful slumber, and for that we are not to blame. We recognize the hand of God in our affliction, and bear it as patiently as we can. But we have no right to murder sleep by our faithless fears, our anxieties, our brooding cares.

We have no right to take the time that God gives us for rest, and fill it with vain regrets and foreboding fears. When God says, Rest, we must not labor. Let us lay our heads upon the pillow of contentment and rest in peace. The contented man is the tranquil man, who works with a light heart and sleeps with a quiet spirit, and is prepared for the labor of the day through the rest of the night.

If this contentment be so essential to our health and well-being, if it is a duty enjoined upon us by the Word of God, how shall we attain it? How may we train ourselves to be contented? How shall we acquire this tranquil spirit, how make these peaceful days and restful nights our own?

Contentment is not the fruit of circumstances. You will not win it by the increase of your goods, or the bettering of your outward estate. We often say, I should be satisfied if I had so much. But observation should suffice to correct us. Your neighbor has what you covet; is he satisfied? Wants grow faster than wealth. In my experience the happiest men, so far as happiness is measured or determined by circumstances, are those of moderate means, neither pinched with poverty nor burdened with wealth. Thousands upon thousands of men are seeking contentment in circumstances. They travel round the world for change of scene when they need change of self. They build a new house when they need a new heart. They are eager for more wealth when they have not learned to use what they have. Pope puts the truth in his incisive way:

Oh happiness! Our being's end and aim!
Good, Pleasure, Ease, Content! whate'er thy name:
That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die,
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,
O'erlooked, seen double, by the fool, and wise.
Plant of celestial seed! if dropped below,
Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow?
Fair opening to some Court's propitious shine,
Or deep with diamonds in the flaming mine?
Twined with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
Or reaped in iron harvests of the field?
Where grows?—where grows it not? If vain our toil,
We ought to blame the culture, not the soil:
Fixed to no spot is Happiness sincere,
'Tis nowhere to be found, or everywhere.

It may be said, with such exceptions and qualifications as attach to generalizations of this kind, that if any one of us is not contented where he is, he would be contented nowhere, for contentment is a quality of spirit. There are many who set contentment before them as a goal to be attained after years of labor. They will spend most of their lives in making a fortune, then they will be content. But is it worth while to work like a slave for forty or fifty years for the chance of five or ten years of enjoyment? There are multitudes of men who in acquiring the means of pleasure lose the capacity for pleasure. They are rich enough to command the finest music, when their ears have grown dull; the noblest books and paintings, when their eyes have grown dim; the choicest dainties, when teeth and stomach have gone together. They have everything to enjoy when they

have lost the power to enjoy anything. In youth they have capacity without opportunity; in age they have opportunity without capacity. They have given themselves to making money until they are fit for nothing else. If they retire from business they are wretched. The rest, the content, the happiness for which they have toiled and striven, eludes them. The man who does one thing only for fifty years finds that is all that he can do. He has worn the ruts of life so deep that he cannot get out of them. And often after a vain endeavor to find contentment elsewhere he goes back to business and dies in the harness.

Contentment is not the fruit of circumstances. Nor is it a matter of natural disposition or temperament. Some of us are of a more hopeful, sanguine, sunny temper than others. It is easier for us to be happy. Cares sit lightly on one that would crush another. What you brood over until you cannot sleep your neighbor throws off with a laugh. Some men are by nature light-hearted as a child, while with others it is an effort to smile. It is easier for this man to be contented than for that one. But contentment is enjoined upon us all. No matter what your circumstances, your disposition, be contented. You of light heart and cheerful spirit, always ready to break into a laugh, and you who are by nature of a melancholy temper, whose face is drawn into a frown until it has almost lost the power to relax into a smile, be content. You may be poor, you may be sick, you may be gloomy and morose by nature—

whatever you are, wherever you are, be content. It is a sweeping commandment, and no man may plead exemption by reason of any peculiarities of condition or character.

We confess that the commandment is just, the advice is good. We ought to be content, it is better for us to be content, better for our health, our estate, our character, for body and soul. But we ask, Will you kindly tell us how? It is easy to say, Be content. But contentment is a virtue harder to practice than to preach. How shall we attain it? Paul said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content; I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Where had he learned this? In the school of experience, which is the school of God. Contentment is not of nature. There is no royal road by which it may be won. What is asked of us is not the careless light-heartedness of a child, but the calm, sober satisfaction of a man who does to-day's work with his might, and is content to leave the future in the hands of God. The Scripture finds the ground of contentment not in circumstances or in native disposition, but in the promise of God. "Be content with such things as ye have." Why? Because he himself hath said, "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." So that with good courage we say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto

me?" That was Paul's confidence. Why was he content under all the conditions of his eventful, laborious life, filled with hardships and persecutions and trials of every kind? "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." God hath said—is not that enough? May we not rest upon the word of the Almighty? May we not trust our Father? Is not his promise as sure as bonds and merchandise? An error of judgment, a bad investment, a season of commercial disaster may strip us of all we have; but what can rob us of the promise of God? What can steal from us his protecting care, his bounty, his love? If I sleep well when I have a comfortable balance in the bank, should I not sleep when I have the sure promise of Almighty God? Suppose your child should wake in the night and begin to cry and you ask, What is the matter? He says, I am afraid I shall have nothing to eat or to wear to-morrow. You say, Foolish child, all I have is yours. That is what God says to us. "All things are yours." All that I have is for my children. Yet we fret and cry as if there were no God in heaven. What have you? You say, Very little. I am poor. It is hard to be content with no more than this. But have you God for your Father, Christ for your Saviour, the Holy Spirit for your Comforter, the Bible for your guide, heaven for your home? Are the resources of omnipotence pledged to you? And you call yourself poor! No man is poor who is a child of God and an heir of heaven. The best things of the universe are his.

How far the promise brings rest to our hearts depends on what God is to us. If the world is foremost in our thought, we shall grasp of it all we can. We shall never be satisfied, for we shall never have all we want. We shall measure ourselves by our neighbors, and find some one who is better off to stir us to envy and discontent. Montesquieu says, "If one only wished to be happy, it could be readily accomplished; but we wish to be happier than other people, and this is almost always difficult, for we believe others to be happier than they are." But if God is all in all to us we can rest anywhere in him. Just in proportion as the vision of God grows dim and the world fills the horizon of our thought, covetousness, eager, grasping, greedy, voracious, insatiable, seizes upon us. We are content just as we live near to God, for God alone is unchangeable. If we find the ground of happiness in aught else it is unstable, insecure, liable at any moment to be overturned, and we are in constant anxiety and fear lest even the measure of satisfaction that we enjoy may be stolen from us. But the contentment that is found in God endures unshaken amid all the storms of life and abides eternal in the soul.

Here lies the secret of happiness, not in having all you want, but in being content with what you have. Heathen sages have grasped this truth. Socrates said, "Happy is he who is content with least, for contentment is nature's wealth." This is the only wealth that all may possess, that lies open to the poorest, that can never be lost or stolen. Scripture

gives contentment its only sure foundation in the promise of Almighty God. The root of contentment is faith. Christ says to men: "You are seeking rest, happiness. You set it before you as the distant goal of life. You expect to spend most of your days in discontent, in unrest, in arduous toil, in the hope that when the sands of life are nearly run you may attain to peace. You give the freshness of your youth, the strength of your manhood to unremitting toil, denying yourself the pleasures of the world, that in the evening of life, when old age has come upon you, when your senses are dull and your faculties enfeebled, you may enjoy a little season of rest. This rest, this satisfaction that you seek, I proffer you to-day. You propose to win it at some distant time, I give it to you now. You need not wait one hour. Without leaving your place or changing your circumstances, just where you are, just as you are, you may have peace, happiness, content. You propose to buy it by years of toil, I give it to you freely. You expect to find peace in worldly wealth, in conditions that are always changing, always insecure. Here are the promises of God, find your peace in them."

This is not mere theory. God's children have practiced it in every age. The injunction is commended by the experience of myriads of men and women who have found joy and peace in believing amid the darkness of trial and suffering and distress. If you would learn the lesson of content, do not go to the mansions of the rich and great where the

revel and the feast hold sway; do not ask the man of millions who is grasping greedily for millions more. Go to the sick chamber, to the poor, the old, the friendless, to those who suffer with incurable disease, their bodies racked with pain. The brightest faces, the most thankful hearts I have ever known, I have found under such conditions as these. There is peace in the soul, there is praise on the lips. God is theirs, though all else be denied. They who seem to have least to be thankful for are often the most thankful, because their weakness and distress have driven them to God. The less they have of earth the more they cling to heaven. If you would learn the secret of content, if you would have your repinings put to shame, if you would know what it is to give thanks, to trust God, to enjoy the peace that passeth all understanding, visit God's suffering children, who have mastered these lessons in the hard school of experience, and because they have nothing else on which to lean, lean wholly on God.

Multitudes of men and women are outside the Kingdom of God because they never stop to think of life and death and the world to come. They are so engrossed with present cares, so burdened with the duties of the day, so anxious about to-morrow, so eager to get more, so worried about their livelihood, that their mind is never lifted above the daily routine of toil. There are many who might be won to the Kingdom if only this pressure could be lifted from mind and heart. If you speak to them of duty and of God they have no time to think of these

things. Why have they no time? They have all the time there is, just as much time as anybody has, twenty-four hours in the day, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. The trouble is not want of time. You have the same time as your neighbor, but he is in the Kingdom and you are not. The trouble is your mind is so preoccupied, so filled with the cares of the world, that there is no room for the thought of God to enter. You carry your business with you all day and all night. You go to bed with it, sleep with it, rise with it, are never free from it. What chance has God with you? If he speaks you do not hear. Some time he may lay his hand heavily upon you to bow you to your knees, may stretch you on the bed of sickness to make you look up. If you were less eager, less anxious, if you cherished something of the spirit of content God might make you hear.

Godliness with contentment, said Paul, is great gain. As if without contentment godliness is incomplete, imperfect. And so indeed it is. Be a Christian, be a contented Christian. If you are not contented, your trust in God is imperfect. We honor God by our faith, we dishonor him by our fears. Just as we have a tranquil, peaceful mind are we qualified for his service. How can we serve God heartily, efficiently, when the soul is torn with cares and doubts and fears? We commend our religion to our fellow men by the restful, contented spirit. They ask, Does God keep his promises? Does Christ give men rest, peace? Does religion make men stronger,

wiser, happier, better? Can it stand the wear and tear of daily life? Is it good for the workaday world? These are questions that can be answered only in terms of experience. We Christians must answer them, and we answer them not with our lips but with our lives. We honor God and commend our religion to men if we show in our daily living that we have found strength and peace and joy and sweet content in believing upon Jesus Christ our Saviour. Let us show the world that God gives in his Son all that men need, all that men seek, and gives it now.

XVIII

WRITTEN AGAIN

"Again it is written."

Matt. 4:7

The union of the divine and the human natures in the person of Christ involves many difficulties. So does the union of body and soul in man. We are akin on the one side to God and on the other to the brute. If we cannot understand ourselves, why should we wonder if we cannot understand him? The Bible was not given us to clear up all mysteries. If it should undertake to explain everything from the dawn of creation, we should never get to Christ. The world would still be reading the opening chapter of Genesis, for after all these centuries we are just beginning to gain some insight into God's works of creation and providence. There are spots on the sun, but it illumines our path. There are mysteries in the Scripture, but it teaches us how to live. And even the hard passages of the Word, smitten by the hand of faith, have often, like the rock in the wilderness, yielded the water of life to the thirsty soul.

We shall not stop to ask, because we cannot hope to answer, the question, How could Christ be tempted? This we must believe, it was a real temptation. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Those words indicate at once the range, the reality, and the result of his

temptation. It was no sham battle that Christ fought in the wilderness. Temptation is not sin, yielding is sin. Temptation is a necessary part of life's discipline, and even the assaults of Satan are embraced within the purpose of God. It is a strange conjunction of terms, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the Devil. Satan, too, is God's servant. Before temptation turns to sin the outward suggestion of evil must be followed by the inward response. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we ask that we may be kept from the solicitations and seductions of evil; or, if that may not be, if temptations are needful to strengthen and refine the character, that we may be armed with strength to overcome. If we rush into temptation of our own free will, we have no promise. But if, like our Master, we are led of the Spirit, and following his guidance are brought face to face with temptation, the assurance is ours, that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation will make also the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. "Then was he led up to be tempted," immediately after his baptism. The Spirit that descended in the form of a dove is still upon him, the voice that spake from the opened heavens, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," is still ringing in his ears. Satan is very bold. He attacks us in our highest moods, and it is a common experience of God's people that the most exalted spiritual states are followed by

moods of reaction and depression, so that sometimes we seem to be lifted high only that our fall may be the greater. Satan redoubles his efforts when he sees that we are about to escape him. He loves a shining mark, lays hold of the most eminent of God's saints in the hour when their triumph seems assured. Jesus said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," because Peter confessed in him the Christ. And almost in the same day as the promise came the stern rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan," because Peter sought to turn him from the way of the cross. What hope have we then! Christ has conquered, and we may conquer in him. "I have overcome," he said. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith," because faith unites us to him. It was a battle royal that was fought there in the desert. For thousands of years Satan had been ravaging the earth, destroying the souls of men, until he seemed to hold possession of the field. Then God came to earth in person and took command. God and Satan met face to face, Satan was defeated, his power broken, and every man who will put his trust in Christ may have a part in Christ's victory.

Let us inquire how this story bears upon our lives, how we may draw from the example of our Lord wisdom and strength for our conflict with the Tempter.

First Satan sought to lead Christ to distrust God, to make use of his divine power to relieve his hunger. "Command that these stones become

bread." But he would have been no true man, no example for us, if in time of need he had fallen back upon his omnipotence. He might use his divine power on behalf of others, he would not use it for himself. He had entered upon the path of humiliation and self-denial, and he trod it to the end. Satan had another arrow in his quiver. Failing to lead him to distrust he would lead him to presumption. "Thy trust is in God, then from this pinnacle of the temple cast thyself down, relying upon his promise that the angels shall keep thee safe." Foiled the second time the Tempter made a third and last attack. "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." That is to say, these shall be thine and thou shalt be mine. That is the consideration that underlies every promise Satan makes to men. Observe that these temptations are addressed to appetite, to pride, to ambition. They answer to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which John represents as the component elements of the world of sin. They are the points which determine the circumference of man's desires. There is no temptation which does not appeal to one or more of them. Satan brought to bear upon our Lord his whole armory, and in vanquishing these temptations Christ overcame all the might of hell.

It is the second assault of Satan that invites our study now. "The devil taketh him to the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If"—that is one of Satan's favorite

words, sly, insinuating, venomous as a serpent—"If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone." Why was the pinnacle of the Temple chosen? To give sanctity to the deed, to array the suggestion of evil in the garb of religion, to deck presumption in the robes of faith. Surely here in thy Father's house thou mayest trust him, rest upon his promise. No harm can befall thee there. Satan is very religious, sets Jesus on the pinnacle of the Temple, and quotes Scripture. But there was another reason. The pinnacle of the Temple was the most conspicuous point in the holy city. The Temple was the center of the national life, and its courts were thronged with worshipers. Satan says: "Here before the eyes of the people give an exhibition of thy power. Cast thyself down and borne by angels thou shalt descend in safety to the earth. So shalt thou make known to Israel that thou art the Son of God, and they will crown thee King. Thus in a moment thou shalt win the promised Kingdom." God's way to the Kingdom lay through poverty and reproach and shame and sorrow and death. Satan bids him make a short cut, try an easier way. It is a familiar temptation, and myriads succumb to it every year. The way of excellence is the way of the cross. Toil and sacrifice and self-denial are the conditions of success in every sphere. Satan is constantly proposing some other and easier path. Men desire wealth. God's way to it lies

through hard and patient labor. They weary of it, they are in haste to be rich. They try short cuts to fortune. They forsake God's way for the Devil's way, and the penitentiaries are full of them. Men desire power, political preferment. God's way to attain it is in the way of honor, of integrity, of unselfish devotion to the public interest. The people know their friends and they are not ungrateful. The course of our history is strewn with the ruined reputations and broken hearts of men who forsook the path of honor and sought place and power by the low arts of the demagogue and the politician. Some of them were men of shining parts, of capacity to fill the highest places in the nation's gift. But they forfeited their self-respect and sold themselves for nothing, and died broken-hearted because after all their plotting and scheming they failed to win the prize. And even those who do by crooked paths climb to places of power, display upon their heads a foolscap and not a crown. We are all tempted to turn aside from God's way and seek the end of life by shorter and easier paths of our own devising.

Satan is very cunning. Some men will bite at a naked hook. The lowest and most ignoble temptation will win them. For other men sin must be disguised. Here he baits his hook with a text of Scripture. He sets Jesus on the pinnacle of the Temple and there quotes Scripture to him. He tempts him to presumption, and calls it faith. But this is not faith. Faith is modest, humble; presumption is proud, vainglorious, always seeking to make a show

of itself. Faith is linked with obedience. You have no right to trust unless you obey. The promises are for the faithful. He is not a saint but a fool who thrusts his head into the lion's mouth and prays God to keep him. Let him run, and pray while he runs. The feet have a part to play on that prayer as well as the lips.

The Devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. To be sure he knows his Bible better than many Christians. He can lay his finger on the very passage that he needs. "He will give his angels charge over thee." The words that follow in the psalm he omits, "to keep thee in all thy ways." Whether the omission is significant or not, our Lord did not stop to notice it. How did he meet the temptation? He met Scripture with Scripture, wrested the weapon from the hand of Satan and turned it against him. "Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." We tempt God by putting his promises to a needless test. We say, God has promised this. I wonder if he will keep his promise. I will try and see. I will put him to the proof. Is that faith? We tempt him again if we seek to use his power for our own selfish ends, to pervert his promises to our own advantage, without regard to his purpose. That is to turn his power and his promises against himself, to make use of his grace to defeat his will. Christ's way was the way of the cross. In that way he had the promise of angel ministry. But if he can turn out of that way and still enjoy that ministry the promise defeats itself. Our way is the way of holi-

ness, of self-denial, of cross-bearing, and all that way is strewn with promises. But if we forsake that way, presuming upon those promises, we make the grace of God the minister of sin.

Our Lord answers Satan from the Word. He meets him upon our level. It was not the divine Man, if we dare so speak, it was the divine Word, that overcame the Tempter. He appealed to that Scripture which is given to us as to him, and in far more abundant measure, since the new Scripture is added to the old. He used a weapon that fits our hand, wielded a sword as keen in our grasp as in his. Do not stop to parley with the Tempter, to argue with him. Smite him with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Be thankful that you can say, "It is written." You are not thrown back upon your own wisdom. Your safety does not hang upon your skill in logic. It is not a conflict of wits in which you are engaged. God has spoken and his word is preserved. He puts an answer in your mouth, a weapon in your hand. The weakest believer, who could not hold his own for one moment in argument, may arm himself with the wisdom of God. Let us be thankful that to every suggestion of the Evil One we may answer, "It is written."

Lay great stress on that word "again." It is the key to the right use of the Scripture. The Bible is not a scrapbook and its truth cannot be drawn from isolated texts. The Greeks told the story of a man who offered his house for sale, and carried about with him one of the bricks of which

it was built to show what kind of house it was. You may almost as easily judge of the house from a single brick as of the Bible from a single text. All heresies are partial truths. Every one of them is built upon some portion of the Scripture, detached, isolated. Every system of iniquity that has appeared in Christendom has appealed to Scripture for support—slavery, polygamy, the divine right of kings, religious persecution. So great and good a man as Augustine held that men might be constrained in the matter of religion by the strong arm of the civil power, and defended his position by the word of the master of the house in the parable of the Great Supper, Compel them to come in. The ultimate fruit of his teaching was the Inquisition. Bassanio says truly, "The world is still deceived with ornament. In law, what plea so tainted or corrupt, but being seasoned with a gracious voice obscures the show of evil? In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text, hiding the grossness with fair ornament? There is no vice so simple but assumes some mark of virtue on his outward parts."

I can prove anything I please from the Bible if you will let me choose my texts, and will promise not to answer, "It is written again." Distrust the dogma that pins itself to a single verse. Suspect the doctrine for which you must hunt with a microscope. The great truths of Scripture are written boldly across the sacred page. You do not need to search for them. You have only to open your eyes to see

them. Learn to take large views of truth. Commit yourself to the great currents of thought and purpose that flow through the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Do not fancy that you know your Bible when you can quote a hundred or a thousand verses. You must learn the relation of part to part, must throw the light of every portion of the Word upon every other portion, must blend the separate rays of law and psalm and prophecy and gospel and epistle to get the pure white light of truth.

Satan tempts men with Scripture to-day as he tempted Christ by presenting a fragment of the truth as the whole truth, by detaching a single text from its place and saying, This is the word of God. There are those whom he leads to presumption, as he sought to lead Christ. They turn to those passages of the Word which speak of the love, the mercy, the long-suffering of God, and say, God is good. I may live as I please and it will be well with me in the end. I may fling myself down into the abyss of sin and he will give his angels charge over me. They close their ears to the threatenings of the law, are deaf to the thunder of Sinai. They hear the voice that says, God is love, but will not hear the same voice saying, God is a consuming fire. It is madness to trust the mercy that we reject; to set our hope on the grace that we despise; to say, Surely God will save me, even while we thrust away his hand, outstretched to save. Or if Satan cannot tempt men to presumption he seeks to drive them to despair. If he cannot persuade them from Scripture

that God is too merciful to punish he seeks to persuade them that God is too just to pardon. How many souls has Satan buffeted and bruised with those words that speak of the unpardonable sin! There is a sin which hath no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. That is a dark saying, and the shadow that it casts has brooded over many hearts. May not I be guilty of that sin? May not I have crossed the line that divides God's mercy from his wrath? May it not be that for me alone of all God's creatures there is no hope, that neither repentance nor prayers nor tears can avail to open for me the gates of mercy? Many are they whom Satan has stabbed to the heart with this deadly weapon. It is their very faith in the Word that gives power to the thrust, that lays the soul open to the fiery darts of the Evil One. Some of the most earnest and devoted Christians I have ever known have been called to pass through this horror of great darkness. What is our defense when Satan turns Scripture against us? More Scripture. It is written—yes—but it is written again. You tell me of the unpardonable sin. It is true. I read it here But read on. It is written again, "Whosoever will, may come." "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And now I know that if I want to come to him I am not guilty of that sin. The unpardonable sin is the sin of him who will not be saved. He only is thrust out who will not come in. So long as there is in my heart a single spark of love for God, of desire for righteousness, so long I know

the Spirit is striving with me. If he were withdrawn, I should be hardened, sensible to fear indeed, keenly alive, it may be, to the terrors of the law, filled with forebodings of judgment; but I cannot love God and righteousness in any degree unless the Spirit dwell in my heart. And the gates of heaven are never closed against him in whom the Spirit makes his home.

Whenever Satan finds in the Word a weapon you may find there a shield.

Satan quotes from the Psalms. They traverse the whole range of human thought and feeling from the depths of sin to the heights of glory. Here is the cry of the repentant soul for pardon, of the troubled soul for rest. Here are the loftiest raptures of the redeemed, the joys unspeakable and full of glory. The psalmist spake out of his own experience, and his experience is ours. Heart answers to heart. The Psalms are the holy place of the Old Scripture, as the Gospels are the holy place of the New. From the Psalms Satan quotes. He does not scruple to enter the inner sanctuary and lay his hand on the ark of God. He plays on the tenderest feelings, the most sacred emotions of the soul. And the words seem to bear the meaning that he puts upon them. Here is the promise. Why not trust it? Christ answers him from the law. It is written in the Psalms. Yes—but it is written again in the law. The law is the final test. In each temptation Christ appealed to it. You must submit to the law every doctrine, every emotion, every experience. The Christian life is not wild

and lawless. Every thought and feeling of the heart must bear the yoke. Our hearts may deceive us. There are forms of excitement, emotion, that we term religious which have no right to the name. Here is the written Word. Try the spirits, whether they be of God. By this standard test every experience. Does it incline you to keep the law? Can you harness it to the service of God? The emotions and aspirations that make us discontented with our lot, that end with themselves, and cannot be put to use, are not born of the Spirit. The highest experience possible to human nature, the utmost reach of our capacity, is to love God. And what is this love of God? Is it high and rapturous emotion? Is it an ecstatic and uplifting mood? The apostle of love defines it—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Love is the fulfilling of the law.

Now we can appreciate the purpose for which the law was given. It seems to us hard and stern. It denies, it forbids, it hedges in our way on every hand. Satan tries to set us against the commandments, to play off the love of God against the law of God. But what is the aim and purpose of the law? When Christ was tempted he took shelter in the law. "It is written." The law is given for safety, for defense. It is the strong tower into which the righteous runneth and is safe. When the wolf is near shall the sheep complain that the wall is high and strong? Gibraltar is not so beautiful as a flower garden, but in time of peril men leave the roses for

the rocks. The world is a battle field. Life is a warfare. The foe is grim and strong, and if we trust in ourselves we are lost. But God has reared for us this impregnable fortress of the law. It shuts us in that it may shut the Tempter out. When we have no answer of our own to the whisper of evil we can reply, "It is written." God shuts us up in the law as he shut up Noah in the ark, to save us. "Thou shalt not" may seem to us harsh and forbidding as it falls upon our ears again and again. But when we have found in it a place of refuge, when we have seen Satan retire from it baffled and beaten, when the law has been to us a buckler tried and proved on many a hard fought field, we shall learn to thank God for it and shall hear the accents of love in the stern notes of the law as well as in the tender tones of the gospel. He who gave us his Son gave us his law, and both are given in love. The law is not a prison but a fortress. Nothing is commanded in the law that will not bring a blessing, nothing is forbidden that would not bring a curse. We run against the law only when we seek to go astray.

The Word of God is at one with itself. There is no discord between the law of Moses and the Psalms of David. The thunders of Sinai blend in unison with the notes of David's harp. Faith and works, love and duty, emotion and obedience go together. The law underlies all Scripture, as it underlies all experience, all life; for the law is the will of him by whom the universe is ordered. Beneath the flowers that bloom bright and beautiful is the enduring

granite. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Our fitful emotions and experiences are ever changing, but the soul that is established upon the eternal rock of the divine law shall never be moved. To build upon ourselves is to build upon the sand, to build upon the Word is to build upon the rock. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Know your Bible, my friend. Be so familiar with it that at every suggestion of evil the fitting answer will spring at once to your lips. Every day is a battle. Do not leave your armor at home. Acquaint yourselves with all Scripture. Then Satan cannot deceive you. When he urges, It is written, you may answer, It is written again. Train your children in the knowledge of God's Word. You are anxious to prepare them for life. Furnish them from the Word. Jesus learned the Scripture from Joseph and Mary. Church and school cannot take the place of home. Father and mother cannot shift their responsibility. You can give to your children nothing that will be such a safeguard in the hours of trial that lie before them as the knowledge of God's Word. That Word is both sword and shield, and he who is thus armed cannot be overcome. He shall withstand in the evil day, and having done all, shall stand.

XIX

THE SYMMETRY OF LIFE

"Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love."

II Peter 1:5-7

"For this very cause" throws us back upon the verse preceding. God has done great things for you, do you therefore act your part. To the divine grace which is given you add your own diligence. What has God done? He has called you by his own glory and virtue. The whole energy of the divine nature is thrown into the divine call. It involves the election of the Father, the atonement of the Son, the effectual working of the Spirit. And having called you he gives you all things that pertain to life and godliness, all that is necessary to lead a godly life here and reach heaven beyond. It is his purpose that you shall become partakers of the divine nature, shall be renewed in the whole man after the image of God.

It is often said that the doctrine of election destroys the motives that lead to a holy life. If I am elected I shall be saved, do what I may. I need not concern myself about the way, for the end is sure. A good Methodist woman whom I knew used to say that Presbyterians were dangerous people, for

they taught that what is to be will be. I suppose we shall have to plead guilty. But we believe as the Scripture teaches, that God ordains the means as well as the end. If he calls me to eternal life, he calls me to repentance and faith and good works; and if these are wanting I have no claim to a place among the elect. He who is elected to heaven is elected to holiness, and no man can read his title clear to mansions in the skies unless he is trying to do the will of God. Only as I am in the way have I reason to hope that I may reach the end.

There are those who regard salvation as a bargain concluded in a moment. They get religion, and the work is done, as the title to property is passed by a stroke of the pen. "'Tis done, the great transaction's done." Religion is a clever contrivance by which God kindly engages to become responsible for our souls that we may give ourselves with undivided attention to the pursuit of the world. Make your peace with God; then your future is assured, and your life is henceforth your own. But the work of salvation is not finished when you have been born again; it is only begun. The new birth introduces you to a new life. To be born is only the beginning of living. The cradle is neither the dwelling place nor the goal, but the starting point of life. God gives the life, we must live it. God gives us grace, we must use it. God gives us salvation, we must work it out. Remember it is the believer to whom that command is given, Work out your own salvation. To the jailer who asked, "What must I do to

be saved?" Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." He could not work out his salvation until he had received it, any more than a man can live before he is born. To work out your own salvation is not to work out a salvation of your own. God opens the gate of heaven, invites us to come, prepares the way, offers guidance and help; but we must make the journey step by step. He will help us but he will not carry us. The gate is open, the way prepared, but we must climb. One man was borne to heaven in a chariot of fire—only one. The rest of us must walk. It is a long journey and all the way uphill. Elijah's chariot is not running.

So much God has done, calling us and giving us all that we need. What remains for us to do Peter goes on to show. "Adding on your part all diligence." You must throw yourself into the work. God is in earnest, you must be in earnest. Your salvation cost God the blood of his only-begotten Son; shall it cost you nothing? God labored, suffered, sacrificed that you might be saved; do you think that you have nothing to do? You work hard for the little bit of earth you get; shall you have heaven for nothing? For every dollar you earn you must pay in honest labor; shall grace and righteousness and truth and the likeness of God be had for naught? Lowell tells us indeed, "'Tis heaven alone that is given away; 'Tis only God may be had for the asking." Salvation is free. But we must not forget that the Master bade us strive, agonize, to

enter in. God gives freely, but it is hard for us to take. The gate is open, but the way is long.

God has elected you and called you to be the heirs of his Kingdom. What then? Take your ease? No. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. To God's grace add your diligence. It is easy to become a Christian, it is hard to be a Christian. The hardest task that any man can undertake is to lead a Christian life in this evil world. It requires all diligence, the continued exercise of every power and energy that we possess. But it is worth it all. "In your faith supply virtue." The Christian life is not a mere matter of addition. Modern psychology lays great stress upon the unity of the soul. It cannot be divided into faculties or groups of faculties separated by rigid walls of partition. There is one living intelligence, manifesting itself now as thought, now as emotion, now as will. We do not simply add grace to grace as if they were separate and distinct. The graces of the Christian life are indissolubly linked together. They spring from a common root. They are vitally related as manifestations of one life. Grace for grace is the divine order. As grace is exercised new grace is given; and every grace received and employed draws others after it.

The law of growth in nature and in grace is symmetry. Life tends to develop in all directions, so far as it is free. The Christian life ought to be symmetrical, well-rounded. The word rendered "supply" suggests a beautiful figure. It comes from the root from which our word "chorus" is

drawn. The Christian character should be like a well-balanced and perfectly trained chorus, in which every member bears his part, and all unite in swelling harmony to lift the song of praise.

That is the ideal that invites us. But we fall far short of it. We incline by nature to cultivate the easy virtues, the congenial graces. Character develops along the line of least resistance. We ought not to grow in a straight line. Life should throw out its branches like a tree on every side. But we are one-sided, lopsided. We develop the graces that are in harmony with our inclinations, and the others are neglected. We do what we like to do. We try to fashion grace after the model of nature, cut the new life after the pattern of the old. Let us make the personal application. You are by temperament ardent, active, energetic. You want to be doing something. You are quick in act, hasty in speech. Suppose you take a course of lessons in patience, in charity, in thoughtfulness and see what you make of it. We sometimes wonder when we see those who have been most active and useful in the service of God laid aside by sickness or infirmity. Has God so many faithful servants that he can afford to dismiss them? Why does he hide them in the sick room when the Church and the world are in such need of their service? We must recognize the physical causes that are at work. The ardent, energetic spirit often drives the body beyond its strength and whether we serve God or the world we pay the penalty if we transgress the laws of health. We often

cast upon providence the blame of our own misdeeds, and complain of God for inflicting what we brought upon ourselves. Sometime ago I was talking with a woman who had recently lost her husband. She told me how he had lived in violation of the simplest laws of health, and in the next breath exclaimed, "Why did God take him from me?" When I was a boy there was an elder in my father's church who was a great sufferer from dyspepsia; and I used to wonder in my childish way that so good a man should be so sorely afflicted. But when I sat at his table the mystery was solved. It was not providence that gave him dyspepsia, it was the bread. What he needed was not to pray, but to get another cook. Piety is no protection against sour bread.

Yet, of course, above all is the overruling providence of God. And we may catch a glimpse of his purpose in permitting those who are engaged in his service to be laid aside. It is often true that they are growing one-sided. They are cultivating one set of virtues at the expense of others. They are becoming deformed, misshapen. They are so busy in attending to other matters that they neglect the care of their own souls. They have little time for study, for meditation, for prayer. They grow nervous and irritable and censorious. God will not have it so. He says to them: "You have done enough. It is time that you thought of yourself, gave heed to your own spiritual life. You find no leisure for communion with God, for the study of the

Word, and you are growing narrow and superficial. I will rob you of your strength, in which you make your boast, I will shut you up in your room alone with me, where you must think and read and pray. I will make you know yourself, discover your weaknesses, your sins. You have been so busy attending to your neighbor's faults that you have forgotten your own. I will bring them to your remembrance, and set conscience at work upon them. You have learned the lessons of diligence and perseverance and unwearied toil; you shall learn the lessons of patience and meekness and love." That is the highest course in the school of God. And he lays them upon their backs that they may look up.

Or you are by nature of a quiet, contemplative disposition. You cherish in your secret heart a touch of contempt for the nervous, fussy people, who have not learned the secret of peace, but are always in motion, skipping about like grasshoppers, and accomplishing as much. Yours is a life of quietness, of dignified repose. You enjoy your religion. You like to come to church. You like to think that you are numbered among the elect, and that heaven is yours. Your life is one-sided, too. You have obeyed the word, "Come"; but you are deaf to the word "Go." The command is, "Follow me," and you cannot follow the Lord Jesus by sitting still. He went about doing good. You must bestir yourself if you would keep up with your Master. Sometimes he worked all day and prayed all night. Perhaps you think you are praying when you are only dream-

ing; perhaps you think you are meditating when you are only dozing. Try a little labor, a little sacrifice. Trouble your ease, break up your repose and see how you like it. If you will not do it, God may do it for you. Many a snug nest does he overturn, that his children may learn to mount up with wings as eagles. And we cry, "O God, I was so comfortable; why should I be disturbed?" It is easy to flatter ourselves that we are pretty fair Christians so long as we contemplate our favorite virtues, our pet graces. We are very religious, so long as religion does not interfere with our desires. But let it cross our inclinations, let it thwart our wishes, let it command what is distasteful, and we shall see how much we love it. We are on good terms with God so long as he takes good care of us and lets us pursue our chosen way. Our prayer may be, O God, let me alone. When he seeks to turn us out of the path of our will, then we are put to the test. When we feel the rein we rebel.

We cannot trace in detail the unfolding of the Christian life as it is depicted here. Grace leads to grace. Faith leads to virtue, that energy of the soul which expresses itself in a life of holy activity and power. Faith is the surrender of the life to God; virtue is the ordering of the life according to the will of God. Virtue is faith in action. But in the conduct of the life there is need of knowledge, practical judgment, that the activity may not be misdirected and barren. With this goes self-control, the mastery of self, for if this be wanting unbridled appetite and

untamed passion will wreck and ruin. Man is the only being in the universe, so far as we know, that possesses a divided nature. Every other creature is either good or bad. Man alone is both good and bad, capable of rising to heaven, of sinking to hell. In this divided nature lies the tragedy of our life. Then comes patience, which includes both steadfast endurance of evil and unwearied perseverance in good works. "Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." James 1:4. How we mar the work of God by our impatience, as if the marble should twist and squirm under the tool of the sculptor. How would the statue appear when the work was done? Patience in its highest sense is loving submission to the will of the heavenly Father, that he may accomplish in us the full purpose of his grace.

These are the virtues which belong to Christian character in itself. Then follow the virtues which are involved in our relations to others; godliness, the reverence and obedience we owe to our Maker; brotherly kindness, which we owe to all those who bear with us the name of Christ; and crowning and comprehending all, summing up in itself as the fulfilling of the law all the duties we owe to God, to our Christian brethren, to the world, is love, the consummate grace and perfect flower of the Christian life.

Let us observe that the Christian life does not develop these graces in chronological order, one after another, but altogether; as the several parts in

the chorus do not succeed each other, so that now one is heard alone and now another, but blend together in harmony.

Passing by the others with this brief mention, let us fix our thoughts upon the first and the last of this chain of Christian graces. The Christian life begins with faith. That too is of God. For Christian character is a divine creation. "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them." Eph. 2:8-10. God must renew us, we cannot renew ourselves. The first step upon our part is the yielding of ourselves to him. God is not working with clay or stones, but with spirits that were made in his own image. He will not renew us unless we surrender ourselves to him. That is the reason why such value is attached to faith as the initial and determining grace of the Christian life. Its importance lies in the fact that it throws the soul open to God to do with it as he will. It is not simply laying hold of God, it is letting God lay hold of us. It is therefore the starting point, the foundation of Christian character. God will not enter your heart against your will. He will knock at the door but he will not break it down. Faith opens the door and lets him in. No other grace of the Christian life is possible without faith, for until faith has played its part God is shut out of the soul. The first step in the Christian life is to

give yourself to God by faith, and he will develop in you the graces of his Kingdom.

As Christian character begins with faith so it terminates with love, the perfect and consummate grace which comprehends all others. It is always represented as the crowning glory of the Christian life. We call Paul the apostle of faith, James the apostle of works, Peter the apostle of hope, John the apostle of love; but they all bear witness to the pre-ëminence of love and with one voice accord it the highest place.

Why is it?

Love is the godlike grace. Faith and hope spring from the weakness of the creature. They speak of our infirmities, our limitations, our insufficiency. They attest our dependence. They distinguish us, set us apart, from God. God does not believe, God does not hope. We believe because we do not know, we hope because we do not have. But love identifies us with God. God loves, and we love because he first loved us. If there be in your heart one spark of pure, unselfish love to God or man, it was kindled in the breast of God. Love is the divine image. Love is the divine nature of which we are to become partakers. Through love is our communion with God made perfect. "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." I John 4:16. Through love we are renewed in his likeness. Love makes the soul godlike. Paul prayed for the Ephesians: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted

and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." Eph. 3:17-19. If God is love, we are like God as love is lord of the life.

Love is the most useful of the Christian graces. Service is the law of the Kingdom. The highest place is the place of the servant. "Whosoever would become great among you," said Jesus to the Twelve, "shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matt. 20:26-28. And again, "Which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." Luke 22:27. Love takes its place with the Master. It is the grace that serves. Without it what we have is shut up in our own hearts and lives. Faith opens the door for grace to flow in; love opens the door for grace to flow out. Faith is the grace that takes; love is the grace that gives; and "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Love acts the part of God, who delights to give, and imparts himself without measure. Faith is narrow, personal, exclusive, love is wide as the world. Faith is the root-virtue of the Christian life, but love is the fruit, and the fruit is the final cause for which the root is ordained.

God does not save you merely for your own sake.

He is looking beyond you to some one else. There is some one whom he would reach through you. He called you that through you he might lay hold of your neighbor, your friend, your child. God could speak to men without us—sometimes he does. But generally he speaks to men through men. There is only one instance in the New Testament of the conversion of a soul by the immediate agency of God without the ministry of man. That was the case of Saul of Tarsus. He was so strong and masterful that the risen Christ came to him in person. Ordinarily when God wants a man he sends another man after him. He will send you if you will obey him. He needs you, he needs every man, woman, child, for there are many more outside the Church than there are inside. It is the office of love to minister, to bring the knowledge and the grace of God to sinful souls.

In face of the explicit and repeated teaching of Scripture we fall into the habit of thinking of love rather as an ornament of the Christian life, elegant but superfluous, an optional grace, a work of supererogation. We must be honest and just and true, but we may love or not, as we please. If you should say to a Christian man, "You are untruthful, you are dishonest, you are unclean," he would resent it bitterly. For these qualities he conceives to be the essentials of right living. But if you should say to him, "You are lacking in the grace of love," probably he would not be much disturbed. Yet the Scripture represents love not so much as a simple

exercise or grace of the renewed soul, but rather as the disposition or temper of the soul, controlling all its moods and motives and expressions, all its exercises and experiences. It is the grace which gives character and worth to all our actions. Paul takes up one by one the gifts and actions on which men pride themselves in the Christian life—prophecy and knowledge and the faith that works miracles, and almsgiving and martyrdom, and pronounces them all worthless in the sight of God without love. Love furnishes the motive that alone renders our gifts and sacrifices acceptable to God. Love sets the stamp of the Kingdom on our words and deeds, which else are counterfeit. If love be wanting in us the very essential image of God is wanting; for if he is love, how can we be partakers of the divine nature without love?

Faith begins, love crowns the work of our salvation, the edifice of Christian character. It begins with the surrender of the soul to God that he may accomplish in us all his good pleasure. It terminates in a life renewed in every part in the image of God, in holiness and love, obedient to his will, and bearing rich fruit to his praise.

"If these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian life diffuses blessings on its heavenward way, as the river in its swift rush to the sea turns the wheels of a hundred mills, gives drink to the thirsty fields, and marks its course by the beauty and fertility that

spring up on either side. The life is hid with Christ in God and draws from the unfailing springs of life and power. Faith receives from God, love imparts to the world. The true life is always receiving from God, always giving to men. God gives through us. God makes us dependent upon him to keep us near his side; dependent upon each other to draw us close together. What I have is not my own, I hold it in trust for you. What you have is not your own, you hold it in trust for me. That is the way God binds us together. He will not suffer us each to take his portion and go off by himself like greedy children. We must share with our neighbor. That is true of our life in every sphere; it is true of the Christian life. Election to heaven is election to holiness. The call to salvation is a call to service. If God has chosen and called me, that is no reason to take my ease. It is the reason why I should give all diligence, supply in turn every grace and virtue of the Christian life, and see that I am not idle nor unfruitful, that I may make my calling and election sure.

Such is the nature, the growth, the fruit of the Christian life. Mark how glorious is the issue. Do you on your part supply grace after grace and there shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of those who enter heaven saved as through fire, like Lot fleeing from Sodom, themselves barely escaped, while all their life work is consumed in the mighty conflagration that wraps

the globe in flames. These are they whose Christian life is undeveloped; poor, negligent, careless Christians. Yet because there is in their hearts the germ of faith God mercifully grants them entrance to his Kingdom, though they come with empty hands. But the diligent and faithful disciple, who has sought to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to do his duty toward God and his fellow men, to him is accorded an abundant, a triumphal entrance. He sweeps through the gates a conqueror from life's battle field, is greeted with the approbation of his Lord, and exalted to the place of dignity and power promised to him that overcometh. Be not content, my friends, barely to creep inside the gate. Strive to enter as a victor, that you may lay your honors at the feet of your Saviour.

Let God have you, my friend. He wants you. He will make you what you ought to be. You have been trying to do for yourself, perhaps, and you have made poor work of it. Let God try. Let him work in you, work with him. God calls you, God gives you exceeding great and precious promises, God proffers you all that is needful for a holy life, gives you his Word, his Son, his Spirit, opens to you the gates of his Kingdom. Yield yourself to him. Set yourself diligently and earnestly to do his will. Then shall your soul be renewed in the likeness of God, your life shall prove a blessing to the world and you shall inherit the Kingdom.

XX

THE THOUGHTS OF LOVE

"Love taketh not account of evil."

I Cor. 13:5

The word "charity" is unhappily chosen, for it has led many to suppose that the grace commended in this chapter is almsgiving. It is love of which Paul speaks. God is love. The soul renewed in the divine image must reflect that love. Love is the vital principle and motive power of the new life in Christ. Without it all else is vain. Knowledge, faith, giving of alms, even martyrdom profit nothing if love be wanting, for God looketh on the heart. Motive gives quality to action. What you do depends largely on circumstances; why you do it depends upon yourself.

Paul we term the apostle of faith, James the apostle of works, and John the apostle of love. Yet each of them gives the first place to love. Love is first, because love is godlike. Faith and hope belong to the weakness of the creature, spring from our imperfection. Love belongs to the perfection of the Creator. God does not believe, God does not hope, but God is love. It is greater than the other graces of the Christian life because it includes them all. "As every lovely hue is light, so every grace is love." It embraces faith and hope, for "it believeth all things, hopeth all things." Faith is the begin-

ning, love the consummation of the Christian life. When you have learned to love there is nothing beyond except to love more.

In this chapter Paul has drawn a full-length portrait of love. It is the only grace of Christian character to which such honor is accorded in Scripture. He dwells upon it as the artist lingers over the canvas, loath to leave it, adding a touch here and a touch there, trying to embody in visible form the beauty that charms his soul. Among its many excellences is this, "love thinketh no evil," as the Authorized Version puts it; or as the Revised Version renders, "taketh not account of evil."

It is hard enough to refrain from doing evil or speaking evil. We are drawn to it from without, driven to it from within. But love "taketh not account of evil," lays the hand of restraint even on the thoughts of the heart and will not suffer them to transgress. Love governs hands and lips through the heart. Purify the fountain and the stream is pure. A clean heart makes a clean life. Three questions press upon us: Do you work evil? Do you speak evil? Do you think evil?

Two interpretations are given of this characterization of love.

(1) Love is slow to suspect evil.

Love makes allowances, puts the best construction on the acts and motives of men, looks on the bright side, the better side, would rather think well of a man than ill. And if it is forced to recognize evil, it regards the sinner more in sorrow than in anger.

A jealous, suspicious nature is always in trouble. A man of that disposition is constantly wounded by his friends; for it is like raw flesh that smarts at the slightest touch. If you are on the watch for slights, you will find them in plenty even where they do not exist. We have all known persons so thin-skinned that you can scarcely touch them without gloves. You can hardly speak without offending them; yet if you are silent they are grieved.

It is evident enough that the love that thinks no evil does not rule the world. There are those who esteem it a mark of mental superiority to regard life habitually from its worst side. They are like vultures with a keen scent for carrion. They say, Men are all selfish. I have lost all faith in human nature. Every man has his price. Politics, business, society, all are corrupt. Good men are only those who have not been found out. When you find a man who says, I have no faith in men; there is no such thing as virtue in the world; vice and hypocrisy divide it between them—watch him. He will bear watching. When old Dr. Johnson was told of some one who maintained that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, he said: "Why, sir, if the fellow does not think as he speaks, he is lying; and I see not what honor he can propose to himself from having the character of a liar. But if he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice why, sir, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons." It is a bad sign when a man sees nothing in the world but evil. You may conclude

that he judges others by himself. The world is all yellow to the jaundiced eye. He who distrusts everybody, if not himself dishonest, is yet morose, unsympathetic, selfish, if just not generous.

There are those who pride themselves upon their knowledge of the world, who boast of their skill in reading human nature, when they are acquainted with only the lower and meaner side of either. They have gone through the byways and explored the alleys of society, have rummaged in their neighbor's garbage can, and have drawn their conclusions. Is that to know the world? Because you have spent years in a hospital or an insane asylum, are you therefore qualified to pass judgment on mankind? The city of Cologne was once famed for its ill odors. Coleridge recognized seventy-two distinct stenches. In the midst of the city rises a magnificent cathedral, one of the noblest monuments man has ever reared to the praise of God. Suppose I tell you I have visited the city, and you ask me, "How were you impressed with the great cathedral?" I answer: "I did not enter it, nor even see it. I spent my time in the alleys trying to find the seventy-two odors of which Coleridge speaks. And I found most of them." Have I seen the city? That is the way some men see the world. They are bats, at home only in the darkness. They have a keen ear for discords, but are deaf to harmony; an eye quick to discover deformity and sin, blind to beauty and to grace. It is better to be deceived a hundred times than to trust no one, better to lose money than to lose your faith

in man. What we look for we shall find. Look for untruthfulness, dishonesty and you will find them. And in your search you may grow color-blind until you can see nothing else. Look for truth and honor and fidelity, and you will find them, not always, but often enough to keep alive your faith in human nature. The happy and the useful man is he who believes supremely in God, and with due reserve in his fellow men.

Sometimes evil presents itself so gross and palpable that it cannot be suffered to pass unnoticed. We are forced to take knowledge of it, to recognize its character. What does love do then? It "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness." There are other ways of rejoicing in iniquity besides practicing it. There are those who are always on the watch for it. They jump at conclusions, put the worst construction on everything. If a man gives, he is ostentatious; if he does not give, he is mean. If he is active, he is ambitious and officious; if he is not active, he is careless and indolent. If he does well, it is for effect; if he does ill, it is only what they expected. They misrepresent, they exaggerate. Beneath the glass of their fancy the molehill becomes a mountain. They carry their budget of news from house to house. Have you heard the latest? With a smirk on their faces they say, Isn't it too bad! These are scandalmongers that trundle their garbage carts all through society and poison the air we breathe. If a wolf be injured or disabled, the pack set upon him and devour him. The same spirit is often seen in men.

Paul said, "If a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Society often says, If a man be overtaken in a fault, tear him to pieces.

Peter bids us, "Above all things be fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins." Love takes no pleasure in sin, seeks to hide it out of sight, is quick to forgive, to help, to restore the sinner. If it must speak it speaks in sadness. If it must punish, it is as a mother punishes her child, not in anger but with the purpose to save.

(2) Love is slow to impute evil.

This is more precisely what Paul has in mind. Love holds no grudge, does not harbor malice, or lay up men's ill deeds against them. There are those who keep a debit and credit account with their neighbors, setting down on one side all the benefits, on the other all the injuries they receive. They purpose to return good for good and evil for evil. They count it unmanly to forget a friend or to forgive a foe. That is the way of the world. Love thinks no evil, keeps no reckonings of the wrongs it suffers, is glad to forgive and forget. Is that easy? Try it and see. Put away every thought of unkindness from your heart toward the man who has wronged you most deeply, insulted you, outraged you, defamed you. Sometimes we fancy love is sentimental, weak, effeminate. Measure it by what it does. The very hardest task that can be laid upon human nature,

love and love alone performs. Summon the strength of your manhood of which you boast, and see if you can cast out every bitter thought from your heart. Now let love come in, and love will do it. Love is the mightiest power in the world, because love alone will give us the victory over self. Sometimes we say, I will forgive, but I cannot forget. We repeat the tale of our wrongs to all we meet, blacken the character of the man with whom we have a quarrel, and conclude with the pious remark, "But I would not harm him for the world." Tear his good name to tatters, set his friends against him, brand him a thief, a liar—but harm him—not for the world. Is that forgiveness?

Love is ready to forgive because it is not thinking of self. If self be the center and the sum of my regard, if I am concerned only for my dignity, my rights, my interests, every offense against me is a blow at the heart of the universe. He who treads on my toes tramples on the Ten Commandments. To run counter to my wishes is to break the whole moral law at once. We look at everything from the standpoint of self. We say, Ptolemy and Copernicus were both in error. The center of the solar system is neither the earth nor the sun. It is here. Where I stand is the hub of the universe. In love self is forgotten. Love does not ask first, What is this to me? How does this affect me? There are larger considerations. Love is humble, forgetful of self, thoughtful of others. He who wrongs me does himself far deeper wrong. He may harm me in body or

estate, he wounds his own soul. Love bids me think of him, pity him. Love teaches me to look upon him with the eye of God, whom we have all offended sorely, yet who waits and longs to forgive us all.

Sometimes we deem it unmanly to forgive. Men and nations prate of honor, and believe that insulted honor must be appeased with blood. The plot of many of our popular romances turns upon revenge. In the crowded theater, amid thunders of applause, the curtain falls upon the hero standing triumphant over the body of his foe, whom he has long pursued and at length has smitten to the earth. From scenes like these myriads of men and women draw their conception of heroism, and forgiveness appears weak and contemptible beside the prowess that washes away the stain of insult in blood. But once again measure love by what it achieves. Forgive, and you conquer the evil passions of your own heart. Hatred and anger and malice rise up within you and clamor for revenge. You deny them, you subdue them. From this conflict the soul emerges master of itself. "He that ruleth his spirit" is greater "than he that taketh a city." Is he strong who cannot control his own passions? Is he a skillful driver whose horses run away with him? Forgive, and you overcome the might of hell. Evil spirits are seeking to gain control of you, to use you for their own malignant ends. Yield to anger, to revenge, and they have won. You are theirs. Resist them and you remand them to the dungeons whence they came. Love is stronger than hell, for in love is the might of God. Forgive, and

you overcome your enemy. You can never conquer him through hatred. You may harm him, kill him, he will hate you still and curse you with his latest breath. You can never overcome evil with evil any more than you can extinguish fire with fire. Hate kindles hate as flame kindles flame. "Overcome evil with good." To meet evil with evil is to increase it, to meet evil with good is to destroy it. A certain king was admonished upon his deathbed to forgive his enemies. "They are all dead," was the grim reply. Another said, "I destroy my enemies by making them my friends." Which is the better way? To forgive is to cast out evil from your enemy's heart and from your own. To seek revenge is to kindle the flames of hell in both. Selfishness leads easily to hatred, love leads always to forgiveness. Love "seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil." These go together. Do not fancy that because love thinks no evil it goes through life blind and stupid, that it has no discernment, no discrimination. Love looks out upon the world with the eyes of God. If the world appears to us so gross, so corrupt, how must it appear to him who is infinitely holy? Yet God sees the good in the world though it be only as a grain of mustard seed, broods over it, cherishes it. He recognizes the good that lingers in the heart of man however depraved he may be, appeals to it, lays hold upon it, until the sinner becomes a saint. He who hates sin with all the energy of his infinite nature is quick to forgive the sinner, because sin can be overcome only by love,

You cannot beat sin out of a man, but you may love a man out of sin.

Whence did Paul draw his inspiration? Who sat for this portrait of love? There is nothing like it in literature. Compare with it the eulogy of Plato: "Love is our Lord supplying kindness and banishing unkindness, giving friendship and forgiving enmity, the joy of the good, the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired by those who have no part in him and precious to those who have the better part in him; parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness, softness, grace; careful of the good, uncareful of the evil. In every word, work, wish, fear—pilot, helper, defender, saviour; glory of God and men, leader best and brightest, in whose footsteps let every man follow, chanting a hymn and joining in that fair strain with which love charms the souls of gods and men." These are fine words but how abstract, how cold, how vague, how impersonal they are beside these words of Paul that glow with beauty and throb with life! How partial and imperfect is the representation they give compared with his. Mohammed, too, spoke of love but dwelt only on a single aspect of it. "Every good act is charity; your smiling in your brother's face; your putting a wanderer in the right road; your giving water to the thirsty or exhortations to others to do right." A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he has done in this world to his fellow men. When he dies people will ask, "What property has he left behind him?" but the angels will ask, "What good deeds has

he sent before him?" There is a largeness, a breadth, a spirit, a personality in Paul's description that we do not find elsewhere. We suspect that this portrait was painted from life. It is not a fancy sketch, a creature of the imagination. Paul did not look into his own heart and write. He did not reach this magnificent conception of love through reflection or through experience. He did not think it out for himself. He did not derive it from Jewish rabbis or Greek philosophers. He drew from life. Love assumed a human form, came from heaven to earth, dwelt among men in a world of sorrow and of sin, endured their trials and their griefs, was subject to their temptations, yet remained pure and steadfast to the end. Paul looked upon Christ, and pictured perfect love. Christ promised that the Spirit should reveal him to the hearts of his disciples, and as the Spirit made him known to Paul, line by line, feature by feature, he reproduced the lineaments of his character, and when the work was done he called it love. Trace the correspondence point by point. What do you find in Jesus Christ that is not in love, what do you find in love that is not in him? He and love are one. The portrait of love could not be painted until he appeared. In him the love of God is revealed, in him men learn to love. Read this chapter in the light of the gospel story and see how in every detail his life bears out the likeness. There is no quality ascribed to love which he does not illustrate in perfect degree. If God is love, we have in Christ love

in human form; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

If this be true we may trust him with all our hearts. We shall find in him the supply of all our need. The love that suffereth long and is kind, that is not easily provoked, that taketh not account of evil, that beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, that never faileth—that is the love we sinners need. He is slow to punish, else we had long since been cut off in our sins; he is quick to pardon. He is very patient with us, forgiving not seven times only but seventy times seven. Read this story of love, and remember that whatever is said of love is true of him. You need him, you may trust yourself to him with your whole heart. You may commit yourself to him with all confidence. He never turned away the meanest or the vilest soul that sought his care. He speaks to you with the voice of love, he opens to you the arms of love, he offered for you the sacrifice of love, he lifts for you the prayer of love in the upper Kingdom, he sends the spirit of love to your heart. If any man be lost it is because he has trampled underfoot the bleeding love of the Son of God. If love fails, God can do no more, for love is his very self. The utmost energy of God goes forth in love.

It is ours not only to trust his love, but to reflect it. He saw the evil of the world with far keener eyes than ours, but he did not like to dwell upon it. He was quick to detect the better nature in men. If there was a spark of holiness in a sinner's heart he

saw it and sought to kindle it to a flame. Believe in God, believe in man. Believe there is something of the godlike yet remaining in every man, and that God is able to renew every man in his image. Do not spend your time groping in the dirt. Let your thoughts lift themselves, spread their wings. There is heaven above as well as earth beneath. Watch for the good in man. Have faith in man because you have faith in God. The world is moving toward the Kingdom. There are shallows and eddies in the stream, but the waters are flowing to the sea. As you need forgiveness, forgive. God is not strict to mark your iniquities, you need not keep rigid account with your neighbor. Forget the favors you do and the wrongs you suffer. Remember the favors you receive and the wrongs you do. "Love thyself last." Remember that God is greater than you are and your brother as good as you, and you will not stand so watchfully upon your rights and dignity. Love God first, and your neighbor as yourself. That is not easy, but there are heights beyond. "Love, as I have loved you," said the Master. That is the love that loves others better than self, that shrinks from no sacrifice on their behalf, that is prepared to surrender life itself for another's good. "He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Only as the spirit of Christ dwells within us can we imitate his love, so that our lives too may correspond in some imperfect measure to this matchless portrait of our Master, drawn by the hand of the great apostle.